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## ABSTRACT

This document presents papers from a conference held in November 1995 in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, convened by the Education Policy Unit (EPU) of the University of Natal as part of research concerning the provision of library-based resources for school learners. Following an introduction are two chapters: "Identifying the Inherited Problems in the Provision of Resources for School Learners" (Jenni Karlsson, Mary Nassimbeni, and Cathy-Mae Karelse) and "Barriers and Limitations to the Provision of Library Resources to Learners" (Jenni Karlsson). The next section, "International Experiences," contains the following papers: "A State-Wide Network of School Community Libraries in Rural South Australia" (Vanessa Little); "A Fully Integrated Community and School Library in Sweden" (Christina Stenberg); "Basic Information Science: Bridging the Gap in Namibia" (Alet Marais); and "Brazil's Experiences with Mobile Libraries" (Walda de Andrade Antunes). The next section, "Alternative Models Being Explored in South Africa," consists of the following papers: "The School Community Library Concept" (Sophie le Roux); "Structured Public Library Information Services to School Learners" (Dorothy Bothman); "Classroom Libraries" (Cynthia Hugo); "Education Development Centers" (Manfred Schroen); and "The Virtual Library" (Sandra Olen). (AEF)

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Edited by Jenni Karlsson  
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# SCHOOL LEARNERS & LIBRARIES

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Education Policy Unit



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## INTRODUCTION

All except one of the papers in this publication were presented at a conference held in November 1995 in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. The conference was convened by the Education Policy Unit of the University of Natal as part of research concerning the provision of library-based resources for school learners. The intention was for senior education managers, educationists and library practitioners to come together and consider ways to make learning resources more accessible to school learners.

From a participation perspective, the conference drew together a diverse group of over 60 people. Four international library experts who had personal experience in innovative practices in their respective countries, were invited to attend the conference. Other participants were senior officials from the national Education Department, provincial education departments and provincial library services. There were also practitioners from the school and public library sector in KwaZulu-Natal, stakeholder organisations such as student and teacher organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), political organisations, and finally, education policy researchers.

The rationale for the conference was located within the argument that library-based resources are a vital component of an effective and efficient education and training system that prepares learners for lifelong learning. This is because information skills that help the learner solve any problem and continuously update his/her knowledge, can only be acquired adequately by regularly using learning resources. Such skills last longer than the accumulation of vast amounts of facts and figures. However, the links between learning resources, school libraries and the curriculum and between improving education quality and school libraries, are often overlooked by education planners.

In particular, the objectives of the conference were to:

- Identify the barriers and limitations in present library-based resource provision to school learners;
- Examine international experiences of alternatives to the traditional school library model;
- Identify appropriate alternatives to the traditional school library model;
- Identify mechanisms which will enhance greater access to the provision of library-based resources for school students.

It is widely accepted that there are great inequities in the provision of libraries in South African schools. In the former education departments of the Houses of Assembly (HOA) and Delegates (HOD) and to a lesser extent the House of Representatives (HOR), schools generally have adequate libraries or media centres, sometimes with advanced technology and computerised catalogues. However, African schools formerly under the homeland education departments and the Department of Education and Training (DET) are usually without libraries of any form or size.

Where a library does exist in African schools, it is often a locked room, empty except for a stock of dusty textbooks. Three experienced researchers in the library and

information services policy field, Karlsson, Nassimbeni and Karelse, provide a coherent overview of the inherited disparities in the school library sector, the policy and restructuring initiatives that are emerging from the national and provincial education departments in the post-apartheid South Africa and end their paper by flagging up the most salient issues to be addressed in the future by policy developers, administrators and practitioners.

In order to provide policy developers and planners with more than a litany of the problems encountered by learners and those library practitioners (in school or public libraries) providing curriculum-related resources, the conference organisers held discussion groups with learners, teacher-librarians, public librarians and administrators. During these discussions information was gathered about the specific barriers encountered as these groups attempted to work within the current reality of the inherited racially-based disparities. Participants were then encouraged to propose solutions to the most substantive problems; solutions that could realistically be implemented by departmental officials. These ideas are brought together, analysed and presented by Jenni Karlsson.

Implementing a redressive programme concerning library-based resources is complex because not only does South Africa lack the financial resources to put a library in every school, but such an option assumes that this is a desirable and suitable model. Indeed, the South African education system is at a juncture of reconfiguration which provides the opportunity to consider alternatives to the traditional school library that would be more appropriate to the new education paradigm.

In this respect there are lessons to be learnt from other countries which have already tested some of the alternatives. The experiences of the state of South Australia and Sweden of joint-use libraries shared by school learners and the community are particularly insightful for South Africa. Vanessa Little describes the reasons why South Australia has chosen to introduce joint-use libraries throughout its rural areas. She also describes how this state-wide system was negotiated with local communities and the problems that were encountered. In the paper on Sweden's experiences of joint-use libraries, Christina Stenberg recounts how one rural municipality decided to merge the community's school and public libraries and the effect this has had on both school learners and adult users.

In Brazil, mobile libraries in the form of a vehicle library and a classroom box collection on wheels have been used to provide learners in remote areas with library-based resources. Walda Antunes gives a description of these mobile models and also indicates how they are adapted to meet the curriculum-related needs of learners.

Finally, the Namibian experience presents a very novel approach that contrasts with the usual solution of extending the provision of library service networks. In Namibia the Ministry of Education and Culture introduced a basic information skills curriculum that could be taught even in those classes with access to only the most rudimentary information resources.

Such international experiences can be borrowed and/or hybridised with the proviso that such models lead to qualitative and sustainable improvements in South Africa's

schooling system. However, options on library alternatives which are appropriate to South African learners' needs and conditions need not only present themselves in the international arena. Within our own borders, several alternative models have been explored and successfully implemented.

Since the education crisis of 1976, some NGOs have tried to support African schools with library-based resources by piloting and testing innovative methods. Cynthia Hugo's paper on the classroom collection model brings with it a wealth of experience. Despite the worthwhile nature of these efforts, in the past NGOs were not in a position to address the national scale and depth of the problem. Nevertheless, these are not sufficient grounds to disregard these models. Education planners should evaluate them in terms of the principles that underpin the new education system and consider whether these models are suitable for sustained implementation on a wide scale.

Other groups in the library sector have debated the worthiness of models such as the multi-purpose library and community learning centres. Sophie le Roux presents the joint-use/multi-purpose library concept and identifies both the advantages and limitations of this model for South African learners. Some public libraries have begun to explore the mechanics of a multi-purpose library model. Dorothy Botham's experiences in the Belhar public library provide a first-hand account of one hybrid of the multi-purpose library model.

The new national education department and some provincial education departments have made a commitment to implement a relatively untested model that is similar to the community learning centre model. This is referred to as the education development centre model and is described in a paper by Manfred Schroen.

The final alternative model presented in this publication is still only a possibility for a small number of South African schools. Nevertheless, with globalisation of information networking, it is inevitable that the virtual library will begin to emerge in those schools with the technological capacity. Sandra Olén's paper provides a well-balanced overview of what the virtual library model can offer school learners.

The papers presented, and the discussions that took place during the *School learners & libraries* conference opened up the debate surrounding the provision of library-based resources for school learners by bringing together a wide range of interest groups. Previous conferences on school library issues have been limited to participation by library practitioners alone. Although some participants assumed that the conference would be more conclusive and facilitate consensus around *the* solution to the problem, later to be presented for endorsement to decision-makers, this was not an objective of the conference, even if it were at all realisable. However, these assumptions point to the level of frustration among practitioners in the sector and their readiness for decisive action from provincial education departments.



## IDENTIFYING THE INHERITED PROBLEMS IN THE PROVISION OF RESOURCES FOR SCHOOL LEARNERS

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### Introduction

The gross distortions of the former education system, in terms of expenditure, opportunities and outputs, parallel and reinforce the inequitable distribution of learning resources. In their mapping of educational provision in the past, Krige and others (1995:76) note:

*All indicators reveal gross neglect of African education in the past. The education of coloured people has been relatively better but there are several aspects of serious concern, while education provision for Indians and whites especially is satisfactory.*

Research over the last five years has highlighted inadequacies in school library/media services. The most important policy documents dealing with library and information services (LIS) in South Africa during this period are:

- *National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI) Library and Information Services Research Group report* (1992)
- TransLis Coalition's *Draft National Library and Information Services Policy* (c1993)
- The African National Congress's (ANC) *Policy Framework for Education and Training* (ANC, 1994; ANC, 1995) and *Implementation Plan for Education and Training* (IPET) (ANC, 1994)
- *Guidelines of a proposed policy for community library information services (COLIS)* (COLIS, 1994)
- *Draft proposals for library and information services for South Africa* (ACTAG, 1995) of the Arts and Culture Task Group (ACTAG)

These documents, together with individual writers such as Stadler (1991), Ölen (1993) and Karlsson (1995), identify various problems in the school library sector:

1. Huge disparities in budgetary allocations between the different departments giving rise to the following features which are especially evident in African schools:
  - widespread absence of facilities;
  - inadequate provision of materials;

- inadequate physical accommodation;
  - lack of trained personnel.
2. A policy vacuum or poorly conceptualised approach to the role of information resources in teaching and learning, leading to the marginalisation of school libraries in the education sphere.
  3. Poor coordination between school libraries and other sectors, with consequences such as poor liaison with public libraries and virtual exclusion from the South African Interlending Scheme.

It is widely believed that the introduction of appropriate learning resources in schools and neighbourhoods is central to improving the quality of the learning experience. Against the background of budgetary constraints faced by the new educational dispensation, this paper attempts to identify some of the issues which should be explored in redressing imbalances in a new education system, by focusing on material inputs, standards of provision, optimal use of resources and implications for teacher education and the school curriculum. The majority of school learners are African, marginalised by decades of systemic neglect and discrimination. Thus, this paper concentrates on the needs of these disadvantaged learners in particular.

## The Past

### Departmental background<sup>1</sup>

Prior to South Africa's first democratic elections in 1994 and the resulting establishment of a single Ministry of Education, there were 15<sup>2</sup> Ministries of Education in South Africa. These Ministries and their departments were differentiated along racial and ethnic lines, in accordance with the apartheid system and philosophy of Christian National Education.<sup>3</sup>

Educational resources were allocated unequally, reflecting the racially-based values and preferential treatment of the apartheid state. This impacted on the quality of education offered through the various administrative departments as exemplified by per capita expenditure (see Table 1).

The administrative departments of these Ministries each developed their own character underpinned by separate parliamentary Acts. They designed and built their own schools, trained and employed their own staff and developed their own permutations of school models, governance structures and curricula.

<sup>1</sup> This section relies heavily on information in the *Report of the Committee to Review the Organisation, Governance and Funding of Schools* (DoE, 1995).

<sup>2</sup> Some of the literature cites South Africa as having 19 separate departments. The additional four departments were the provincial administrations located within the white House of Assembly's Ministry of Education.

<sup>3</sup> Christian National Education is a term which encapsulates the theoretical paradigm that underpinned the apartheid education system.

Comparative table of the former Departments of Education, 1994†

| Ministry / Department                          | Per capita expenditure | Matriculation pass rate |
|------------------------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| House of Assemble (HOA) (i.e. white)           | R 5 403                | 98%                     |
| House of Delegates (HOD) (i.e. Indian)         | 4 687                  | 92,44%                  |
| House of Representatives (HOR) (i.e. coloured) | 3 691                  | 87,5%                   |
| Qwa Qwa                                        | 2 241                  | 31%*                    |
| DET                                            | 2 184                  | 48,5%                   |
| Ciskei                                         | 2 056                  | 35%*                    |
| Venda                                          | 1 792                  | 53%*                    |
| Gazankulu                                      | 1 699                  | 50%*                    |
| KwaNdebele                                     | 1 595                  | 25%*                    |
| Bophuthatswana                                 | 1 580                  | 63%*                    |
| Lebowa                                         | 1 549                  | 29%*                    |
| KaNgwane                                       | 1 480                  | 32%*                    |
| KwaZulu                                        | 1 459                  | 42%*                    |
| Transkei                                       | 1 053                  | 49%                     |
| Average                                        | 2 222                  |                         |

(Source: DoE, Provisional 1994 C/S data, DoE 1994/5 budget estimates. In DoE, 1995; *Business Day*, 29/12/94; *Cape Times*, 29/12/94; *Sowetan*, 29/12/94; Sidiropoulous et.al., 1995:228; *Edusource Data News*, Mar. 1994 and Apr. 1995).

† Percentages marked \* refer to 1993 pass rates.

They were different even in the way in which they handled library and media studies policy (NECC, 1992:9-10). Only a few of the departments formulated a specific school library policy. For example, HOD issued a document which promoted an integrated approach in which the school library is central to classroom teaching, and stressed the importance of audiovisual materials and software. Likewise, the various provincial education departments of the HOA each developed their own particular approach. In the Transvaal, the media centre was considered to be an essential facility in every school and which should function as a support in the teaching of the curriculum and independent learning. The Cape Education Department also recognised the supportive role of the school library and was committed to engendering a love of reading among pupils and equipping each learner with the knowledge and skills to use media.

The NEPI researchers found that the existence of a policy was directly related to the provision of school libraries and media centres. Schools administered by HOA and HOD education departments consistently had libraries with good collections and equipment, and which were supported by subject advisors. DET, which was the single largest provider of schools for African learners, only officially acknowledged the role of school libraries in teaching and learning in 1983. Prior to this development, there was no legal imperative to provide school libraries or train teacher librarians for African schools. This led to enormous backlogs and generations of African learners who reached adulthood without having had the experience of a library of any description.

### **Institutional background and comparative output<sup>4</sup>**

Each day learners in South African schools have widely divergent educational experiences. Some have a secure, resource-rich, learning environment under the tutelage of well-qualified teachers who use exciting and innovative methods of teaching and learning. However, the majority attend schools in which the basic infrastructure and conditions conducive for learning are absent. The physical infrastructure has deteriorated as a result of inadequate maintenance, poor initial quality of the buildings, or destruction. In addition, large quantities of school equipment have been lost or stolen (Eastern Cape DEC, 1995; *Star*, 25/2/95, 26/3/95; *Sunday Times*, 2/11/95; *Sowetan*, 14/12/94; *New Nation*, 20/10/95, 27/1/95). Although the deliberate destruction of school property became common in many township and rural schools during the period of anti-apartheid struggle, criminal vandalism has also played a role.

In addition, many schools of the former DET and the homeland departments have experienced a breakdown in what has come to be known as the 'culture of learning'. From his research in schools in the Northern Transvaal, Johannesburg and Orange-Vaal regions of the DET, David Smith (Karlsson and Pampallis, 1995) found that 90% of these schools are characterised by the late arrival of pupils and teachers, early departures, class dodging, truancy and even basking in the sun.

The divergence of educational conditions and availability of learning resources correlate closely with the administrative department and the type of school. There is no reliable data on the number of schools having libraries, but in KwaZulu-Natal it is estimated that only 20% of schools have libraries (Schroen, 1995). Therefore, only general remarks can be made.

- *State and state-aided schools* are financed almost wholly by the state. User fees are not compulsory. African schools rarely have a functional library although there may have been a room designated as the library when the school was planned.
- *Community schools*, mostly in rural areas, are poorly resourced. They are built and maintained by communities, with the state only paying for salaries, textbooks and stationery. A library and collection in any form is rarely found in these schools.
- *Farm schools* on private commercial farms for the children of the workers. These schools belong to the farmer and are subsidised by the state. Although there is a 100% subsidy for buildings and a 50% subsidy for maintenance costs, these schools are found to be the poorest and worst resourced in the country (DoE, 1995:20).
- *Model C schools* have compulsory user fees to cover 15% - 25% of operating costs, while the state only pays salaries according to a pupil-teacher ratio. In the past these schools were state schools for white pupils, were well funded by the state and did not charge compulsory user fees. Each school has a well-resourced library and in many cases the catalogue is computerised. Some of these schools even have access to Internet.

<sup>4</sup>

This section relies heavily on information in the Report of the Committee to Review the Organisation, Governance and Funding of Schools (DoE, 1995a).



- *Private or independent schools* receive a state subsidy but are well-funded through high user fees. On the whole, the libraries and media centres in these schools are exceptional and provide learners with the latest information technology, including access to the Internet. It must, however, be acknowledged that not all private schools are like this. Some, especially the city centre 'colleges' or 'fly-by-nights', are very poorly resourced and funded.

Although all schools built by the state make provision for a library or resource room, the reality is that these spaces often become storerooms in which textbooks collect dust. During a visit to a high school in KwaMashu by one of the authors (J. Karlsson), the library was found to be so disused and neglected that a rock had to be used to drive open the rusted barrel bolt on the security gate. Inside a few tatty donated books lay scattered among multiple copies of textbooks still sealed in their plastic packaging.

Matriculation pass rates (see Table 1) indicate that there is a correlation between pass rates and the schools administered by a particular department. Although these rates cannot be attributed to the existence of learning resources in a school library because of the presence of other qualitative influences (e.g. trained staff, educated parents, etc.), it suggests that learning resources are one indicator of the quality of education offered at a school.

#### **Budgets and spending differences**

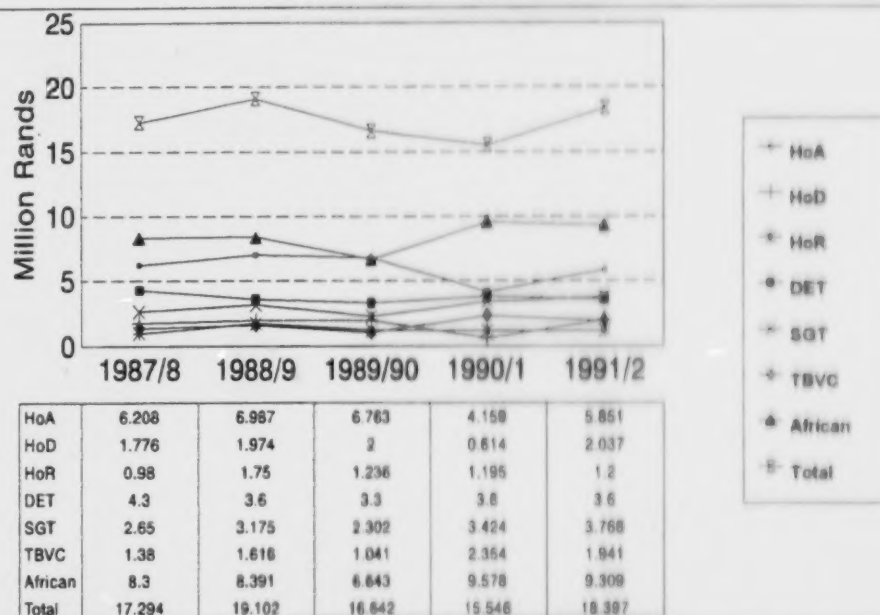
An analysis of policy, practice and funding patterns in the various departments responsible for education showed distorted distribution of funds and a real decline in spending on library materials (ANC, 1994b). Figure 1 compares the total spending by the various departments on library materials and shows a decline over five years. Aggregated expenditure on library materials as a percentage of the total 'edspend' over the same five year period declined from 0.18% in 1987/8 to 0.09% in 1991/2. Figure 2 shows the per capita expenditure by departments over the same period, indicating better resourcing of libraries in the HOA and HOD schools and the dramatic differentials between them and the HOR and schools for African students.

Departmental neglect and the consequent low levels of library materials allocation in African schools led to Read Educational Trust's<sup>5</sup> significant contributions both in materials development and in the provision and distribution of library materials to schools. For example, in 1993 they handled the distribution of books to the value of R1,309,085 for the Independent Development Trust (IDT) and other projects to the value of R2,182,248 (Read, 1994).

IPET researchers found that it was not possible to disaggregate spending on personnel for school libraries in the departmental salary budgets. The ACTAG report (1995:38) notes, however, the loss of many teacher-librarian posts controlled by the (white) provincial education departments.

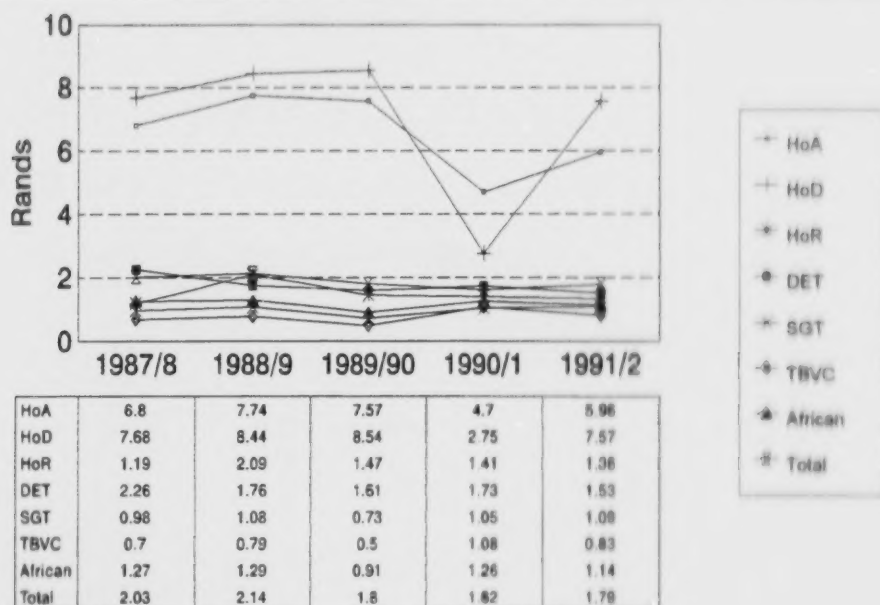
<sup>5</sup> READ Educational Trust is a non-governmental organisation (NGO) active in the education and community spheres throughout South Africa.

**Figure 1**  
**Library Material Expenditure**



(Source: ANC, 1994b:[n.p.])

**Figure 2**  
**Per Capita Expenditure by Department**



(Source: ANC, 1994b:[n.p.])

**Human Resource Development**

Better provision of libraries and more explicit school library policies in the HOA and HOD led to the establishment of teacher-librarian posts in schools controlled by these departments. By contrast, such posts were rarely established in African schools due to the lack of provision of libraries. HOR was caught in the middle of these two scenarios with the provision of libraries in some schools and the establishment of some teacher-librarian posts. School librarians received pre-service education and training (PRESET) through specialised programmes offered at some universities (Universities of South Africa (UNISA), Western Cape and Natal) and some training colleges. The colleges are the primary sites for the delivery of specialised training.

It is worth noting that among the problems faced by these programmes is that students coming largely from African schools have not been exposed to school libraries and are therefore disadvantaged in their studies. This is reinforced by the inadequate curriculum in training colleges which do not require that all teachers take courses in information skills which would equip them to integrate information skills with their subject teaching (Ölen, 1995).

In-service education and training (INSET) opportunities are provided mainly by NGOs such as the Read Educational Trust.

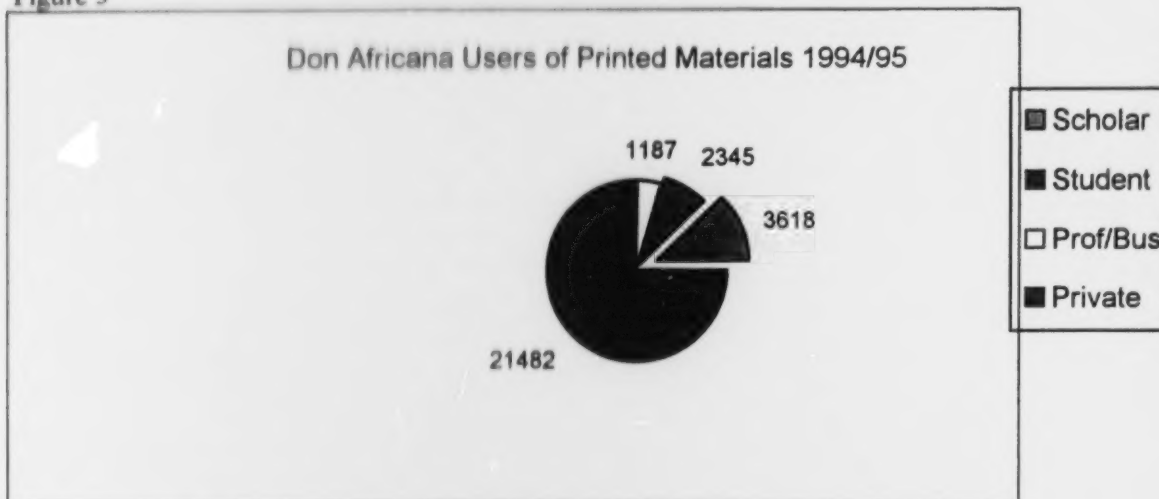
**Public libraries and school learners**

In the absence of school libraries, it would have been obvious for school learners to use the public/community library. These however, were either non-existent or grossly under-resourced and neglected. It was only in 1990 with the scrapping of the Separate Amenities Act, that school learners of any race were legally able to use all public libraries. Many of these learners have begun to rely heavily on the resources in the formerly 'whites only' public library. While in 1992, scholars using the Durban reference and Don Africana libraries were found to be from HOD schools, in 1995 most of the scholars were said to be from former DET schools (DML, 1995a).

However, after-school use of public libraries is not restricted only to public libraries in city centres. During a recent afternoon visit to the public libraries of Phoenix, South Africa's largest Indian residential area, one of the authors (J. Karlsson) found the libraries bursting with school children and a queue of more than twenty waiting to use the photocopier.

Although there is no data on school learners' use of *public* libraries, a survey of users of Durban's Don Africana library found that the second largest user group were scholars (DML, 1995a).

Figure 3



A survey on 4 March 1995 to assess how patrons feel about waiting in the queue outside Durban's overcrowded Reference and Don Africana libraries (DML, 1995b), found that:

*...58 of those who tried [to find information at] their places of study are a combination of those who do not have school libraries and those who attend the many [city] colleges in Durban that do not have library facilities.*

The public library has therefore become an important - and sometimes the only - partner in government's provision of resources which are accessible to the majority of school learners.

#### **Summary of characteristics and hallmarks of the past**

In the past, the system of providing school learners with resources, whether these were in the form of libraries, media centres or classroom collections, was characterised by gross inequalities. Primarily these inequalities were racially based and institutionalised through the former departments, determined by the financing and type of school. Although departments such as DET attempted to address the deficiencies and backlogs by distributing books and other media to schools, the administrative inefficiencies of DET in regions and circuits and the deteriorating physical conditions and lack of security in African schools, neutralised the impact of these efforts. When teacher-librarians were employed, there were also marked qualitative differences as a result of the teacher education offered at colleges of education and the existence (or non-existence) of departmental support in the form of subject advisory services.

The entire education system was also characterised by a lack of democracy and participation of stakeholders. Generally speaking, the Departments of Education and the schools which they administered, were governed by legislation which curtailed the participation of the parent community, students and teachers. Decision-making was hierarchically controlled by departmental officials and school managers without any consultation with other stakeholders (Natal Witness, 29/08/1990). Decisions about school libraries were consistent with the departmental and institutional 'culture' and led

to cutbacks in library and media services being announced without any consultation with stakeholders. Such incidents are evidence that those in positions of authority lacked an understanding of the relevance of learning resources in libraries and the political will to democratise the school system even at institutional level.

South Africa has not had a tradition of local governmental involvement in schooling. This has effectively isolated school library/media services from local government's public library services so that in (white) urban areas there is a duplication of services for school learners. However, almost no library services were provided in townships, informal settlements and rural areas where the majority of learners are located. Furthermore, the long distances between public libraries and African residential areas have made the learning resources that are provided by local government, inaccessible to the majority of children.

## **The Present**

South Africa, at present, is in a period of transition. Thus, while the past system still exists and pervades current conditions and practices, in slow but perceptible moves the framework for a transformed education system is being set in place. We cannot consider new options for the provision of learning resources in isolation from these fundamental changes.

### **The new educational paradigm**

The global information revolution which views information as a strategic (albeit constantly obsolescent) resource and a central feature of the educative process, is consonant with the principles underpinning the new paradigm reflected in the *White Paper on Education and Training* (DoE, 1995b). This paradigm is a fundamental departure from the past educational system in that it is informed by:

- a different set of values and principles;
- a philosophy that the education and the training system must be integrated for holistic and lifelong personal development and sustainable socio-economic growth;
- the Constitution which declares that South Africa is a unitary nation;
- a social transformation which must meet the needs and facilitate the participation of all people.

The continual obsolescence of information compels school learners to adopt practices of lifelong learning and critical thinking. These are based on the acquisition of flexible problem-solving skills at an early age and exposure to a wide range of opinions, perspectives and critical voices. Access to a wide range of learning resources is therefore a critical and essential component of the new educational paradigm and not an optional luxury. Learning resources and the curriculum are in fact the two sides of the same teaching and learning 'coin'.



Within the framework of globalisation and systemic transformation of education and training, an attendant and appropriate library and information services paradigm shift is needed. This will incorporate the following features:

- the delivery of appropriate information and a range of critical voices in a multi-media environment;
- the integration of information, education and development;
- the empowerment of users through interaction with information.

The sustainability of this approach to information work is dependent on the introduction of programmes to impart information literacy and problem-solving skills. Information literacy has been defined as:

*...the ability to recognise the need for information; to find, organise, evaluate and use such information for effective decision-making or problem-solving; and to apply these skills to independent life-long learning (Cheek et al, 1995:2).*

This implies:

- provision of resources to support the curriculum;
- provision of electronic facilities and products;
- information literacy courses integrated into the curriculum and/or taught separately.

While the *White Paper* sets out the principles and framework for systemic transformation within the new paradigm, it does not refer directly to the role of school libraries. However, the description of community learning centres, as proposed for adult basic education and training (ABET), encapsulates key elements that will characterise the transformed educational role of school libraries and resources (DoE, 1995b:31):

*One institutional innovation which the Ministry wishes to see investigated with some speed is the idea of Community Learning Centres. These can be envisaged as a network of facilities, usually pre-existing, which offers regular support and services to students of all varieties in pursuing their learning goals. They would call for a new type of learning facilitator, and have the potential to be connected electronically to almost unlimited data sources and networks. Such centres would form an essential part of the infrastructure required for the realisation of the open learning approaches throughout the education and training system.*

Schedule 6 and Section 126 of the interim Constitution provide the parameters of the relationship and powers of national and provincial governments. Education for school learners is one of the *concurrent* powers, i.e. that both national and provincial governments have authority to legislate and determine policy for. The implications of these concurrent powers in terms of libraries and resource provision, is still inconclusive and is being explored as restructuring events unfold.

**Departmental restructuring**

Since the inauguration of the State President in May 1994 and the commencement of a Government of National Unity (GNU), each province has been restructuring the former departments which operated within their territory, in order to establish a single non-racial provincial Department of Education. This has been an extremely complex process because of the disparities and inequities between the former departments, as well as the imperative to develop a department which is consistent with the new paradigm of education and training. School library and media services have not been isolated from these developments. However, it is apparent (and understandably so) that in relation to the pressures to expand the education service, accommodate more learners and redevelop the curriculum, amongst many other things, library and media services are *not* a priority for the new administrators.

In eight of the nine provinces, the Member of the Executive Council (MEC) (i.e. the provincial parliamentary cabinet), is responsible for both education and culture. As a result, school libraries and public libraries both fall under a single MEC's portfolio. This provides the opportunity for closer collaboration, planning and development at a provincial level, although it does not ensure that this will occur.

Although the National Education Policy Bill has had a bumpy path through parliament and has been referred to the Constitutional Court, this legislation would enable the Minister, through the national Department of Education and in consultation with stakeholder bodies and provincial decision-makers, to formulate norms, standards and monitoring mechanisms for the provision of learning resources (including libraries and media or resource centres). In terms of the interim Constitution, such norms and standards would apply in all provinces.

**Institutional restructuring**

The mixed bag of school types now operating in the provinces cannot continue because it perpetuates the inequities of the past. Between March and August 1995, on the instructions of the Minister of Education, Prof Sibusiso Bengu, a Committee to Review the Organisation, Governance and Funding of Schools deliberated on this problem and made some recommendations.

If these recommendations are accepted by the Minister, there will be only two types of schools: public and independent schools (DoE, 1995a). All schools administered by the Departments of Education will be classified as public schools and funded by the state. Differences will occur among public schools depending on the governance functions for which the school has capacity. Although the restructuring will occur in phases, eventually all public schools will be equitably resourced by the state and offer a similar educational environment (and learning facilities) to school learners.

The implication of this streamlining towards equity, together with the formulation of national norms and standards, is that all school learners should have access to a learning facility such as a library or media centre.

**Budgetary restructuring**

Education's share of the national budget has increased from 21.9% in 1988/9 to 25.8% in 1995/6 (DoE, 1995a:65). However, growth in the national budget over the last year

has been less than 1% as opposed to the average increase of 3.7% over the last 5 year period. Furthermore, publicly provided resources per pupil have declined by about 12% since 1992/3 (DoE, 1995a:66).

Although the current total budget for 1995/96 (R34 billion) was shaped by the previous education system and the 1996/97 budget of the new education departments was still influenced by the previous budgetary process and principles with some minor adjustments<sup>6</sup>, a total transformation of the education budget, including the expenditure on media and learning resources, is necessary in order to underpin and give effect to the new education system and paradigm (Samuel, 1995).

The Review Committee has proposed formulae to allow for advancing quality in schools, improving efficiency and attending to equity and redress (DoE, 1995a:71-73). The provincial authorities would bear capital, administrative and salary costs. But the Review Committee also assumes that quality schooling for all cannot be achieved without direct contributions from parents and communities. Operating costs of schools, including teaching material costs, would be calculated on a per capita basis and where possible, would be financed partly by parents' contributions (DoE, 1995a:74).

At present a special Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) fund has allocated money for the Culture of Learning (COL) Presidential Project. Some of the funds will be allocated to the refurbishment and establishment of Education Development Centres (EDCs) (or community learning centres as they are called in the *White Paper*). For example, in KwaZulu-Natal R20,668,500 will be provided for the redevelopment of 6 teacher centres and 23 satellite centres into EDCs and in the Eastern Cape, approximately R30 million will be allocated for the development of three new EDCs and the redevelopment of 10 existing satellite centres (Siswana, 1995).

The Department of Education is presently gathering figures from the nine provincial education departments on all categories of expenditure including libraries and media collections (including computer hardware and software, audio-visual tapes, chalkboards and transparencies, but not apparatus and school text books). These figures are being collected in three reports, the first of which reflects (Visser, 1995):

#### Projected School Expenditure for 1995/96 on Media Collections

|               | R      |
|---------------|--------|
| North West    | n/a    |
| KwaZulu-Natal | 14 279 |
| Mpumalanga    | 7 420  |
| Eastern Cape  | n/a    |
| Gauteng       | 1 101  |
| Western Cape  | 500    |
| Northern Cape | 54     |
| Northern      | 3 750  |
| Free State    | n/a    |

n/a = not available

<sup>6</sup> For example, in KwaZulu-Natal's 1996/97 budget, library resources are still located in the budget line headed 'stores and livestock'!

### Human Resource Development

The new educational paradigm implies the retraining of existing library and media centre personnel. Continuing education has been identified as an important means of providing appropriate education and training for these workers. Furthermore, in order to optimise resources and to exploit the potential of new media and technologies, the *White Paper* (1995b:31) calls for 'a new type of learning facilitator' who will presumably mediate resources and provide information skills training.

Institutions which have provided training for school librarians in the past recognise the need to design new curricula to meet the needs of the new educational system. Among the general competencies that the teacher-in-training is expected to acquire is a knowledge of (COTEP, 1995:16):

*...resources for learning from the local environment, for example from radio and television broadcasts, and support systems such as remedial services, professional resources, information resources, apparatus and information technology.*

Methodology courses should ensure, among other things, that the teacher is able to select and use a wide variety of resources, including information technology, employ methods which cultivate independence in learning, and which demand on-going growth in reading competence (COTEP, 1995:21). The COTEP document (1995:48) stipulates that teachers-in-training in all phases of school education should take a course in teaching media, including electronic media. Teaching media refer to (COTEP, 1995:61):

*...appropriate aids used by a teacher in teaching, including the use of the school library / school media centre / school resource centre, electronic media and other teaching media.*

This definition has been expanded since the 1994 *Criteria for the evaluation of South African qualifications for employment in education* of the Department of Education and Culture (HOA), which defined teaching aids as those 'used by a teacher in teaching, including the use of the school library/school media centre and other teaching aids' (DEC, 1994:10).

The new Western Cape Education Department plans to introduce information skills courses in schools in place of the current Book and Media Education courses offered. Information skills will be taught in two ways even in the absence of a school library: (a) as a separate compulsory subject from Grades 7-9 (Std 5-7) and taught across the curriculum and (b) integrated with other courses from Grades 10-12 (Stds 8-10) (WCED, 1995).



## **Issues to be considered in the provision of resources for school learners**

### **Creating equity**

A school system must have equity if it is to provide opportunities for every child to develop his/her potential and become an adult who participates in the economy of the country and the democratic processes of society. Thus the learning resources available in public and/or school libraries, must be provided in a way which counteracts the inheritance of the past and creates equity for a fair and just culture of learning and teaching.

### **Democratisation**

South Africa is still only an emerging democracy. Although we have implemented democracy at a macro level, there are still many aspects of our society which must become exposed to democratic principles. Schools and the institutions that provide school learners with resources must become democratic in their policies and practices. As democratic governing bodies are implemented in all schools (DoE, 1995b:70), library and media services should consider the establishment of advisory committees comprising stakeholder representatives who will assist in the development of such services at institutional level. Not only will mechanisms of participatory democracy, such as democratic governing bodies and committees, ensure that resources are more appropriate to the learning and teaching needs of users in schools, but such practices and processes will provide learners with a foundation for their adult lives.

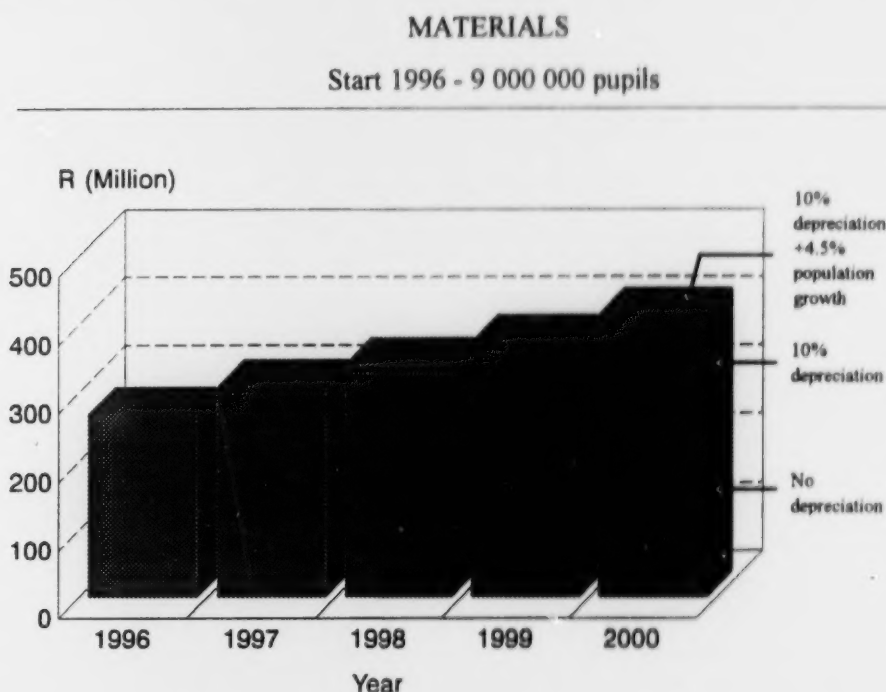
### **Equity through norms and standards**

One of the difficulties in taking any corrective action of the past inequities is the definition of acceptable standards of provision. As Vermeulen points out, most documents that deal with standards relate to quantifiable inputs of such categories as staff materials and accommodation 'that will enable the school library to perform its functions and achieve its aims' (1992:114). However, given the enormous backlogs in the education system, the application of norms and standards which are generally based on international standards, are unattainable for all schools (Vermeulen, 1994:154). The IPET researchers attempted to cost materials provision for school libraries according to the United Nations Education and Scientific Council (UNESCO) standards of an initial 12 items per learner, escalating by 3 items per learner until the level of 39 items per learner is reached.

Based on 1991/2 enrolment figures, and an average price of R30 per item, the cost of provision according to these standards worked out at R923 million in the first year (ANC, 1994b:237). In relation to the 1994 education budget of only R25,6 billion for schools and colleges (DoE, 1995a:67), these costs (and hence the standards) are unrealistically high and unattainable for South Africa at present. A more modest intervention for the most deprived sectors, i.e. the former DET, SGT and TBVC schools, based on the provision of 1 item per year over a 5 year period yields the following estimates.



Figure 4



The unattainability of quantitative standards which may, in any case, be inappropriate and the attempt to link quality of service to form and function, are forcing a rethink of the role of learning resources in schools. Vermeulen (1994) and Stander (1993) suggest that a useful approach would be to assess the mission, aims and objectives of the school library in relation to curriculum delivery as the basis on which to determine the nature, size and scope of the facilities and services. Smit and Hennessy (1995:50) also argue that viewing each school as a separate self-sufficient unit with a complete set of components of a standardised school is a non-viable proposition because these components will increasingly be of a lower standard due to financial constraints. Their solution of education clusters will facilitate sharing of facilities such as the library, personnel and equipment between schools.

Resource-based learning norms will also be influenced by information technology developments in schools. Internet's interactive and multimedia approach is rapidly becoming a norm among competitive nations. As more and more schools link up to the Internet and become part of the information superhighway, students will be able to access electronic information and participate in electronic networks which will enhance learning and teaching. The British National Curriculum Framework for information technology requires that learners at all key stages of their schooling be taught information technology skills of handling and communicating information (United Kingdom. Department of Education, 1995). The *White Paper* (quoted above) implicitly argues the need for information skills among students so that they are equipped to make use of electronic networks and the Foundation for Research Development (FRD) has also recognised the importance of having schools connected to the Internet (Lawrie, 1995).

**Affirmative action and development**

Efforts to improve the quality of learning and to prepare students for their adult and working life should take account of the need to provide learning resources which support new curricula and new approaches to learning. Not only must learning resources uphold constitutional values such as non-sexism and non-racism, but they should provide an offering that will expose the learner to critical, divergent and marginalised voices, particularly those which were silent and censored in the past. The nature of the collection of learning resources should, for example, ensure that gender and other social issues are introduced so that learners develop a more holistic understanding of the nature of society and the ability to think independently and critically. This approach to the collection of learning resources could be described as affirmative action 'of a special type'.

**Information skills in the curriculum**

Global developments, such as the Internet, require information skills for navigating the various electronic networks. The transformed school library with electronic workstations should become the new learning space in which students acquire and use information skills to broaden their educational experience. Policy statements such as the *White Paper on Education and Training* and the COTEP document which emphasise resource-based and independent learning, will be rhetorical without the integration of information skills in the curriculum. Implicit and oblique references to information literacy skills need to be made more explicit in the content of courses and translated into new teaching methodologies. In order to introduce the necessary changes to the education process, educationists and librarians need to collaborate in the design of curricula through which learners will acquire information skills which are transferable life skills.

**Financing learning resources: doing more with less**

Smit and Hennessy (1995:46) point out that it has been estimated that the cost of specialised facilities such as laboratories and libraries in the secondary school can account for almost 50% of the total cost of school building, while general teaching space usually forms less than 30% of the total cost. This fact, together with the enormous backlog of classrooms throughout the provinces and the need to increase provision to those children who have not been enrolled at schools in the past, are persuasive and compelling reasons for the state to prioritise redress in directions other than school libraries. While this is a matter of grave concern to those involved in the provision of learning resources, we must be realistic and use this as a challenge to 'do more with less'.

In addition to contributions from the state and parents, other partnership models suggest themselves. For example, corporate finance has been used for connectivity to electronic information in some schools and, as mentioned earlier, NGOs have been active in providing schools with library materials and training. The cluster model proposed by Smit and Hennessy (1995:59) also suggests the possibility of financial cooperation between the Department of Education and local government authorities. This implies cooperation with provincial library services as well, because they frequently support and develop the libraries offered by municipalities.

**Increasing access: resource sharing and other alternatives**

The constitutional right of every learner to basic education implies that the state has responsibility to provide basic education learners with the relevant resources. Teaching and learning cannot occur in a vacuum. Providing access to these resources compels us to consider alternatives to the traditional western model of 'one school one library'.

We have to look at ways in which the wealth of resources in the Model C and HOD schools can be shared with neighbouring schools. This is not a suggestion to destroy these collections by equally redistributing the existing resources among all schools. Instead, it asks us to consider ways in which these school libraries can be tapped by teachers and learners from neighbouring disadvantaged schools. This may lead us to consider different methods of borrowing and returning the resources and extending the hours and days when the library is open. We need to conduct feasibility and pilot studies of such alternatives to find out how learners would respond to these methods and if they are suitable for our conditions.

Similarly, Gevisser (1993) proposes the centralisation of resources such as libraries and computer centres to be shared by schools and communities. We need to investigate whether a community library that serves both the school and the public is a feasible option in those areas which are most disadvantaged and under-developed. We need more information about how such a combined or shared library impacts on school learners.

Other writers such as Smit and Hennessy (1995) and Alexander (1994) consider all the components of a standardised school, including the library and derive their solutions from an urban spatial framework of school clusters with shared facilities. Smit and Hennessy's (1995) cluster model is based on the notion of resource sharing between a number of schools within close proximity of each other. This may be a model most suitable for areas in which the construction of schools and other educational facilities are still being planned. But while the cluster model will increase the individual learner's access to resources, such a collection will be under stress from the greater numbers of users. The cluster model library will require additional copies of those items under great demand and a replacement budget for frequently used items with a short shelf life.

**Language, culture and nation building**

In a society characterised by diversity, issues of language and culture are highly emotive and require careful handling in public schools. The library has a special role to play in this context, especially in the event that most school learners may not be instructed in their first language after the first two or three grades or receive instruction in their cultural practices and religion. The library, therefore, provides public schools with an institutional mechanism to cater for the diversity in our society.

The local community can then develop resource collections in local languages, even those not taught at the school and collections about cultures and religions practised by the local community. Such resources in various media can be used by local community groups to pursue their constitutional rights where it is not practically feasible for the school to do so through the formal curriculum. In addition, cultural and religious collections could expose learners to resources that have the potential to develop

understanding and tolerance of others. Such collections can be an important component of nation-building in our public schools.

## Conclusion

There are two related dimensions to the problem identified, namely, quantity and quality. On the one hand the current system requires material inputs of information resources, facilities, buildings and equipment, to be provided according to determined benchmarks. This in itself presents the problem of identifying norms and standards of provision. Standards for South African schools have largely been derived from those countries with whom South Africa has had historical (colonial) links (Vermeulen, 1992) and are therefore unsatisfactory. However, the quantitative addition of resources is not an end in itself because a resource base has to be drawn on by the curriculum in order to impact on the learning experience.

In terms of qualitative education, the methods and means of effective utilisation and mediation of these resources have to be addressed so as to ensure that they *do* contribute to the development of a culture of learning. While the schools for the white community were well resourced with library materials, these resources were under-utilised due to the absence of a culture of resource-based learning in these institutions (Ölen 1993). Thus, teacher education that enables teachers to make effective use of information resources is an important component in promoting a culture of learning.

The issue of providing school learners with access to learning resources is complex, involving educational, cultural and local government authorities, as well as a wide range of stakeholders. Policy makers and administrators must, therefore, be cautioned against tinkering quantitatively with the inherited system. As a nation we are now setting in place the framework for a transformed South African education system with a new National Qualifications Framework (NQF), legislation which enables the formulation of national policy, norms and standards, a redeveloped curriculum and a new way of governing, financing and organising schools. We need to consider this total transformation framework and find the most feasible options which will put learning resources into the hands of school learners.

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## **BARRIERS AND LIMITATIONS TO THE PROVISION OF LIBRARY RESOURCES TO LEARNERS**

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While South African library and information service planners must formulate a vision that takes into account current needs and popular aspirations, it is imperative that plans for the future are realistic, recognising current realities as well as recent experiences. Although Karlsson, Nassimbeni and Karelse<sup>7</sup> refer to earlier research reports which problematise the inherited system, it is essential to consider the views of administrators, practitioners (both teachers and librarians) as well as learners, based as they are on experiences, and from a synthesis of these, identify the factors that have acted as obstacles and inhibitors to providing school learners with access to learning resources in libraries.

During the School Learners' & Libraries conference, participants were asked to reflect on their experiences and identify:

- primary barriers that prevent school learners' access to learning resources;
- barriers which can be most easily addressed by decision-makers;
- mechanisms to overcome the barriers.

It is evident from the collected data, that administrators, teacher-librarians, public librarians and learners, share many perceptions about the obstacles that limit access, although different role-players laid stress on different factors. However, the most striking point is that it is not possible to isolate the problems surrounding school learners' daily access to library resources from broader library and information system issues. Although many of the barriers encountered by learners are self-evident, they are related to systemic issues beyond the control of learners, teachers, and librarians. Concurrent with this is the perception that systemic governance and administrative problems are central to the obstacles experienced by learners, teachers and librarians each day.

### **Lack of provision**

The most apparent and severe barrier hampering the access of the majority of learners to resources is the inadequate provision of both school and public/community libraries. In rural areas there are simply no library facilities, while in urban areas, even though public/community libraries are now open to all, these still reflect the geographic character of apartheid divisions and are mostly located in former white residential areas and Model C schools. Although there have been new non-racially based national and provincial governments since 1994, construction of library buildings in townships, informal settlements and rural areas has been negligible. The causes underlying the slow implementation of redressive action are numerous:

- Built environment planning, development and construction is inherently a slow process;

<sup>7</sup> See their paper in this publication.

- Consultation with communities is an integral and unavoidable part of town planning and regional development within a democratic society. Although some senior provincial officials accept the need for community consultation, they are frustrated by government treasury rules which do not allow earmarked funds to be 'rolled over' more than two years and hence they would like to find ways to implement speedier redressive measures without the delay of a lengthy consultative process.
- Budgets for provinces developed two years in advance, were, until recently, still hamstrung by apartheid budgetary principles and administrative structures;
- Most areas prioritised for reconstruction and development require infrastructural development before library and information services can be considered. Even in schools, the COL Presidential Lead Project has had to prioritise the construction of classrooms, the repair of existing school facilities, such as broken windows and doors, and the installation of running water and toilet facilities, and electrification.
- The scale of redress that is required is so great as to be unaffordable even by provincial governments (ANC, 1994a). For many years NGOs, in collaboration with recipient schools and communities, have attempted to intervene and address the lack of library resource provision, especially in schools. The Read Educational Trust, Education Support Project (ESP), Educational Resources Information Service (ERIS) and the Independent Teacher Enrichment Centre (ITEC) are but a few of these initiatives. Although the intervention of these NGOs has been *ad hoc* and, in many cases, unsustainable, provincial governments will need these organisations as partners for the foreseeable future.

#### Weakness of structural links among librarians

Governance and administrative issues in the library and information services sector are characterised by complexity, with libraries in schools being administered and developed by education departments while public libraries are the responsibility of local governments with some involvement of provincial authorities. No structural links facilitate contact between teacher-librarians and public/community librarians. This has led to learning resources in schools being developed without any reference to the resources and services provided in public/community libraries. Furthermore, some teachers and learners make use of both school libraries and public/community libraries, while in some areas there are no libraries for learners to turn to for resources.

Although cooperation with schools has been initiated by some public librarians<sup>8</sup> and these links are useful, they are *ad hoc*, subject to the charisma and vision of the individuals involved and are inadequate to address the broad systemic problems and under-provision of services. The fact that school and public/community libraries are serving the same 'client', frequently developing duplicate collections and services and sharing similar objectives, was not recognised by the former educational authorities or local government structures. Decisions for greater coherence could be made at a political level, but unfortunately library services continue to be fragmented between provincial library services and schools by most of the new provincial authorities.

<sup>8</sup> See Dorothy Botham's paper in this publication for an example of cooperation between a public library and schools.

### **Indecision among decision-makers**

A lack of decisiveness on the part of national policy-makers with the power to establish norms and standards also frustrated practitioners. Practitioners and administrators anticipated transformatory changes to the school library system as South Africa emerged as a democracy in 1994 but these changes were not immediately forthcoming at a political level. In most provinces, the dichotomous school and public library system has been perpetuated by the new decision-makers who came to power in the April 1994 elections, even though some policy statements recommended that there should be joint governance and administration of school and public libraries within education departments.<sup>9</sup>

The obvious explanation for the indecision is that the new national and provincial ministers were faced with more demanding educational priorities which subordinated library concerns. However, it is also likely that there is an oversight among politicians and senior departmental policy developers in appreciating the role of library and information services in teaching and learning. The relatedness of library provision to learning resources and the curriculum is frequently not recognised. This subordination of school and public library-related issues and the perception of indecisiveness on settling systemic issues have lowered morale within the already marginalised library sector who frequently refer to themselves as the 'Cinderella' of education and culture.

### **Attitudinal problems**

Within the parameters of the school, teachers' attitudes to the school library and the use of inappropriate and outmoded teaching methodology were seen to be key barriers to learners access to and use of learning resources. School, and hence learning, were not a 'fun' experience for learners and this undermined the objectives of education. The reason for this was generally perceived to be inappropriate pre-service and in-service teacher education in tertiary institutions. Teachers were not oriented to using resources in their preparation and hence did not encourage learners to do likewise.

In addition, the teaching methods used in schools were not arousing learners to pursue knowledge and education. The new curriculum for teacher education needed to incorporate information skills and an understanding of the centrality of library resources to critical thinking and learning. Employed teachers needed to undergo in-service education and training (INSET) to enable them to move away from teaching methods that encourage rote and mechanistic learning. Teachers' and teacher-librarians' practices should also encourage the notion that learning should be a fun and pleasurable experience.

### **Lack of budgetary provision**

Senior departmental officials have indicated that there is no separate vote for libraries within the provincial budget for education. The budget is dominated by personnel and administrative costs and neglects to make adequate provision for curriculum related learning resources and services. Some teachers have attempted to provide their learners with resources through NGO support programmes such as Read Education Trust's classroom collections. However, these are also insufficient and

<sup>9</sup> See ANC (1994a and 1994b) and *Guidelines of a proposed policy for community library information services (COLIS)*, (1994).



public/community libraries - where they exist - have been hard pressed to stretch their limited resources and act as a stop-gap for school learners' needs.

**Unsupportive environment**

- The mass media competes with other learning resources for the attention of the learner. Although it is an important tool for distance learning and educational support, there are also inherent dangers concerning the nature of the mass media. Learners need to develop critical thinking skills for reflecting on and interpreting messages received via mass media. The immediacy of the medium and the way in which information can be slanted by editing has the potential to present uncritical learners with distorted impressions.
- The high levels of illiteracy in South Africa mean that many learners are in families in which one or more of the adults is not functionally literate. This means that these learners are growing up in environments in which there are few - if any - reading materials. Their parents and other adult acquaintances may not realise the value of reading because of their own lack of experience of libraries and reading, and may not be able to assist and support them with homework exercises.
- Most learners come from poor families who live in conditions that are not conducive to studying. Homes are small, overcrowded and frequently without electricity or a suitable place to study.
- The siting of apartheid's dormitory townships on the periphery of 'white' towns mean that, although the formerly whites-only public/community libraries are now open to all learners, they are remote from the homes of disadvantaged learners. The long distances between townships and city centres make it necessary for learners to use costly public transport if they are to access the collections in the well-established libraries. This becomes even more prohibitive to young learners who need to be accompanied by an adult.

**Absence of legislative provision**

The Constitution establishes the right to basic education. Although this implies the right of learners to have access to learning resources, national and provincial legislation has not yet included such provisions.

**Lack of appropriate resources**

Although under-provision has been mentioned above, when learners do have access to learning resources they are not necessarily appropriate to the needs of learners. For example, most resources are only published in two of South Africa's official languages: English and Afrikaans. This is a severe limitation to those learners who would prefer to have access to resources in their first (mother-tongue) language.

Furthermore, in most cases resources are developed for non-South African learners and imported to South Africa. In many of these resources the terminology, exemplars and images used are not compatible with our society and do not suit our conditions. Such materials confuse the learner. In the past many library and information workers and teachers developed collections which were not sensitive to local conditions. Although much energy was put into the development of these collections, their

inaccessibility in terms of language and unsuitability in content has meant wastage in human effort and financial terms.

### **Inadequacy of the traditional library model**

Public/community librarians feel that, in the absence of provincial education authorities providing resources directly to learners in the form of school libraries, their own institutions will be stretched beyond limit. They have neither the adequately trained staff, the scope and depth of collection, nor the space to effectively support those learners who do not have access to a school library. Public/community libraries have refocused their services to concentrate on the needs of disadvantaged learners. However, their facilities are now overcrowded, to the annoyance of other library users and their budget is inadequate to provide sufficient multiple copies of curriculum-related resources. Furthermore, as mentioned above, the established public/community libraries are not well located for easy access to the majority of learners who reside on the outskirts of urban areas.

### **Problematic barriers are the frontiers of solutions**

This catalogue of barriers and limitations which prevent school learners from having access to resources in libraries is neither definitive nor presented in great depth. It does however identify the most apparent problems which can be addressed. Answers to these problems can be developed by seeing them from a positive perspective as the frontiers of appropriate solutions.

Although systemic issues must be addressed sooner rather than later, such solutions will be largely invisible to the school learner. The new curriculum and paradigm of learning based on critical thinking cannot be implemented in the absence of learning resources. Furthermore, if there is no apparent attempt to address the learner's need for curriculum-support resources at a classroom, school or local government level, learners will lose patience with the new curriculum and become disgruntled and restless, with good cause.

Politicians and senior education officials should take care to avoid unnecessary delays in the provision planning and development processes, particularly when confrontation is an avoidable matter. Although politicians and administrators are the key budgetary decision-makers, it is difficult to envisage changes that favour library provision unless this is brought to their attention by teachers, learners and librarians. These stakeholders will therefore have to develop consensual positions on library reconstruction and development priorities before lobbying politicians.

Although administrators would prefer easier solutions, the complexity of the problem demands that planners use a multi-pronged strategy. For example, increased provision will go unnoticed unless there is also an attendant positive change in teacher attitude which encourages the acquisition of information skills and use of learning resources in a way that is integrated with and underpins the curriculum.

Techniques, including incentives, should be used that are positive, fun-filled, relevant and encourage children to continue learning. One opportunity to change teachers'

attitudes is to offer an INSET course when a collection of library resources is provided on a school by school basis. Simultaneous to this and other strategies, teacher education institutions should ensure that their new curriculum for pre-service teacher education (PRESET) incorporates an awareness of the role of information in knowledge construction and the importance of acquiring information skills. The curriculum of INSET, PRESET and classroom teaching must be consistent with the principles of the new education framework.

One option to prevent uneven provision between schools, towns and provinces would be to introduce norms, standards and evaluative indicators. While the National Education Policy Act gives the Minister of Education this power, the norms and standards for libraries and the provision of learning resources still need to be defined.

Some researchers (ANC, 1994a and 1994b; NECC, 1992) have suggested that coupled with the gross under-provision of school libraries and provincial governments' inability to respond financially to the scope of the needs for learning resources, the problems faced by public/community librarians are driving South Africa to explore models that are alternative to the traditional Western library. Amongst others, one of these would be the joint-use model which has been developed in other countries.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>

See other papers on alternative models in this publication.

## INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCES

### SCHOOL COMMUNITY LIBRARIES IN RURAL SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Vanessa Little, Public Library Services, State Library of South Australia

South Australia is a city state. It has a population of 1,463 million, 1,1 million of which live in the capital city of Adelaide. There are five major regional centres with populations of between 30,100 and 12,700, leaving small sparsely represented populations scattered around the 984,000 square kilometres of the state. Providing cost-effective, quality library services to communities and schools in these areas proved to be a challenging task throughout the planning and implementation stages of this project in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

The state-wide network of public libraries in South Australia represents 137 library sites which are funded by the 118 local government authorities. Of these, 46 are school community libraries in rural areas and there are a further three joint-use or integrated facilities in metropolitan Adelaide, with a new school community library about to be opened in an outer metropolitan suburb.

The libraries are independently managed at the local level but enjoy the benefits of a centralised selection, acquisitions, cataloguing and distribution service which is provided on-line to all sites. The computer system PLAIN (Public Libraries Automated Information Network) supports collection management activities in each library and enables students and the community to access almost 2 million library items around the state, the resources and databases of the State Library, other databases, the Internet and a video and film booking service.

### Objectives in establishing school community libraries

Clearly, the solution to providing quality library services to school and community populations in the small rural townships of our state was going to be challenging. The objective was to achieve *equitable access* and *quality of service* for rural communities, including their students, within reasonable cost frameworks.

The challenges presented to the development group were generally economic. The relatively small size of many communities resulted in a lack of economies of scale and the critical mass necessary for effective service delivery. Thus the per unit, per transaction and other costs of full library services to these communities would have been prohibitive.

Attracting and affording multiple library and information professionals to these very small communities was also unlikely, adding to the economic and quality conundrum. Communities and the State Government would also have struggled to fund the building and maintaining of dual premises for separate school and public/community library services. Even though funding to rural and remote areas is 'loaded' in order to



compensate for the additional costs associated with distance, the cost of full service provision would have been prohibitively high if separate services were provided.

In Australia we often refer to the 'tyranny of distance'. Whilst this can refer to the distance of our country from the European origins many of us have, it is also a tyranny of great distances between cities, towns and communities. The costs associated with transport, telecommunications and travelling are high, especially in the geographically larger states. This is exacerbated by the relatively small populations living in some of these remote areas.

Thus, in relation to this need for economic good practice and service quality, it was decided to establish any 'economies of scale' possible in local communities and to share facilities. We have demonstrated considerable success in this model, so much so that in times of public sector reform and rural recession those Councils which had communities considered in the 1970s to be large enough to sustain stand-alone school and public library services are now reviewing their service models and are endorsing the *school community library model*. A significant number of libraries are moving to further co-operation and amalgamation with Institutes of Technical (Vocational) and Further Education.

As Governments re-invent themselves in Australia in order to compete in World markets, the reality and public perception of value for tax dollars and accountability is very important. The sharing of resources in order to improve services, reduce costs and maximise resource allocations has strong political and community support. School community libraries are often used as examples of effective and accountable service delivery.

#### **Assumptions in the process**

It was assumed throughout the planning and implementation process that:

- access to full public and school library services is necessary for quality education, lifelong learning and effective citizenship;
- there are cost efficiencies in sharing resources, which are necessary to make library services viable in remote areas of the State;
- the capacity to provide broader and better quality services is enhanced by pooling human and material resources;
- small Councils would be unable or reluctant to fund full, stand alone library services from relatively small taxation bases and the State Government would find it difficult to justify additional excessive subsidisation of the very high costs of these services;
- every Council should participate in some way in the provision of a public library service, even if the school community library funded by the Council was in a neighbouring town.

## Historical perspective

The first school community library was opened in Pinnaroo in October 1977 and was followed by the Cleve School Community Library in November of that year. By 1995 there were 46 rural school community libraries in our public library network. Other joint use libraries exist in both rural and metropolitan areas, bringing together combinations of school, public and institute of technical and further education libraries. Rather than a diminishing role in larger communities, this model is being seriously developed for growing areas in our state.

In the mid 1970's, there were very few public library services in the state of South Australia and most of the existing services were in the metropolitan areas. School libraries stood alone within the school institutions and were narrowly resourced to meet the educational needs of their small communities. Institute libraries, the outcome of the previous Mechanics Institutes, operated in many country areas.

Institute libraries were very little more than book exchange facilities, with membership subscriptions being levied to purchase materials. It would be fair to say that these book exchange collections were predominantly fiction and recreational. Full public library services, including non-fiction, reference and information services and readers advisory services were inaccessible to many South Australians, both remote and metropolitan.

The Government of the time became very committed to the development of public library services in order to meet the needs of individuals and to develop literate and informed communities. This commitment was shared by the then Premier of the State and the Deputy Premier who also held the portfolio of Minister for Education. Full public library services, it was recognised, would enhance not only the communities in which they were situated but would significantly improve the quality and range of educational opportunities for students in rural and remote South Australia.

Mr Jim Crawford was then Chairman of the Libraries Board of South Australia and was charged with the responsibility of establishing and developing a model for public library services throughout the State. It is a testament to Mr Crawford's commitment to the task and to the support that he engendered through his implementation group that there is the library network which exists today. It is significant that with many years of experience in local government as an elected representative, Mr Crawford was able to communicate with Councils on their own terms.

One of the groups which dismissed the concept at its first introduction was the professional librarians, who were convinced that this model had not worked elsewhere and that it would not work in South Australia. Nevertheless, given the economic and other imperatives, the implementation group remained focussed on their program and began the introduction of the model to rural communities.

Communities of less than 3,000 residents were targeted as appropriate for school community library services and the preferred model was to establish these services in secondary schools or in area schools (schools in remote areas which cover the full range of levels from reception to final year students).

## Marketing of the school community library concept

School libraries were already in existence within each educational facility, although the size of collections and services varied with the size of the school population and the financial and staffing resources allocated to this educational support service.

Many communities had the Institute libraries, which were the only frame of reference for local people in relation to the concept of libraries. These exchange collections were privately funded by subscription with some government financial support and were operated by local citizens. Local support for these limited services was strong as this was all that citizens ever expected libraries could provide. The need to educate and inform communities as to the importance and value of full community library services was required.

It was important to gain the support of the key stakeholders in each community and each of the funding bodies. Mr Crawford headed a group comprising representatives of the Libraries Board of South Australia, the Education Department and the local government Association of South Australia. Thus, the implementation program had high level, credible support in the eyes of the potential partners.

At this time the commitment by the Minister for Education was so strong that bringing schools to the negotiation table towards joint-use facilities was not a difficult task. Each Council however, operated as an independent unit and the local government Association acted only as a co-ordination body, not as a management body. Thus, it was necessary to negotiate separately with each Council to establish these joint services, rather than with the central local government Association.

Mr Crawford visited each Council area to introduce and develop the concept with local communities. Leaders in each community were targeted to 'champion' the concept within their district and early school community libraries were established as 'models' in areas which demonstrated early enthusiasm and commitment to the concept. The concept was also presented to local Councils as an opportunity for State Government establishment funds, which may not previously have been available.

Funding to refurbish school libraries as school community libraries was provided from the State Government and local government. Whilst the facilities were to be situated in existing Education Department schools, the local Council was asked to contribute to the extension and refurbishment of a facility. State Government subsidies were also available to assist this process through a matched funding formula.

The Institute Library collections and staff resources were redirected to the school community library and the State Government promised on-going funding for materials and community library staffing on a 50/50 basis. In terms of the State Government, there was a clearly articulated eight year plan for implementation of these libraries and the government was aware from the outset of its commitment in financial terms. This allowed for planning and for a funded development plan spread over a range of budget years.

## Implementation of the program

As is the case with many new developments, early implementation was undertaken within very strict guidelines, policies and procedures. The process was driven centrally from the supporting agencies. Following the negotiation of the joint-use facility, formal agreements were signed between the School, Libraries Board of South Australia and the local Council. These agreements were devised from a model proposed by the implementation group and still remain in place today.

Support throughout the process of negotiation and implementation was supplied by the Education Department in the form of dedicated staff and the Libraries Board of South Australia through the staff of the Public Libraries Branch. The very specific and practical support services of the Public Libraries Branch, in relation to materials acquisition, cataloguing and specialist professional consultancy services were made available to school community libraries as they were established.

Staffing of the facilities became the responsibility of the Education Department and the Council was responsible for contributing funds to the Local Board of Management which may provide additional support staff for the community aspects of the library, thus supplementing the support staff allocated to the school library by the Principal of the school.

## How the system works

### Guidelines document

A comprehensive document, *Guidelines for the Operation of school community libraries in Rural Areas of South Australia* has been developed and continuously updated to ensure relevance to the changing needs of these services. Issues such as staffing, funding, roles and responsibilities, collection development, community access, management and training are described within the document. As school community libraries have developed, the need for prescriptive policies and procedures has diminished. Deregulation of the public sector and in particular of the relationship between local government and the State Government has seen the previously centrally led model change to one of local autonomy, within agreed guidelines maintained by the school community libraries Committee.

### Funding

Funding for school community libraries is provided by three major stakeholders:

- The Department for Education and Children's Services (formerly the Education Department) provides the funds to administer those functions provided for the school community. This includes the school-based collections, the teacher librarian, school support officers, community support officers, school related technology and building costs.
- Each Council is required to provide additional funds on the basis of a formula set by the Libraries Board of South Australia. Currently this formula is \$3,500 per thousand population or part thereof. These funds are provided to the school



community library's Local Board of Management and can be used for additional community support services staffing, additional library materials, contribution to building projects and other projects as agreed by the Local Board.

- The Libraries Board of South Australia administers the funds allocated by the State Government to the whole public library network in the State. For school community libraries, the Libraries Board of South Australia allocates funds on a per capita basis for library materials to meet the general community's needs. The distribution formula also has a small distance compensation component. Materials for the community part of the equation are purchased through PLAIN Central Services. These materials are catalogued, processed and distributed to each library. The costs of this on-line service, training, Internet and other database services and the extensive inter-library loan network throughout the State are also met by the Libraries Board from their grant funds.

### **Staffing**

Staffing of School Community libraries is the subject of a separate general agreement between the Department for Education and Children's Services, the Libraries Board of South Australia and the Department for the Arts and Cultural Development (where PLAIN administratively sits as part of the State Library of South Australia). Signed by the two Ministers concerned and the Chairman of the Libraries Board, this agreement enshrines staffing formulae for teacher librarians and provides guidelines for the provision of school community assistant officers.

The Department for Education and Children's Services is obliged to provide a base number of community support hours and then a sliding scale of additional hours based on the population of the community. The school support hours are based on a different formula which is the same for schools without school community libraries. These staff are encouraged, however, to undertake the tasks and develop the skills of the community support officers.

### **Library materials**

Each of the funding agencies provides for the materials relevant to the needs of their constituents. Thus, the Department for Education and Children's Services provides money for materials to support the curriculum, the Libraries Board provides funds to acquire materials for the general community and the Local Library Board of Management makes decisions regarding the possible expenditure of the Council's contribution on library materials.

Currently the school's curriculum materials are not purchased through the PLAIN system, although this has been discussed. This means that the school materials are purchased on a school by school basis and processed at the school. A national database of catalogue records does exist, enabling the teacher librarian to copy catalogues rather than each librarian independently undertaking the cataloguing process. There do seem to be some economies of scale and bulk discounts to be achieved if the schools were to centrally acquire materials along the same lines as the community library part of the library service.

**Premises**

The library building is within the school premises and is therefore the responsibility of the Department for Education and Children's Services. Fixtures and fittings are the joint responsibility of the School and the Council, with items predominantly used by one user group being generally funded from the funding party responsible for that group.

**Technology**

Each of the funding parties contributes to the information technology needs of the library. The school funds computers and other equipment required to support the curriculum. The Local Board of Management often joins with the school to provide the computerised circulation and cataloguing system for the library and the Libraries Board of South Australia provides the PLAIN system which includes database access, a link to the State Library of South Australia and the Internet. Community support activities often generate the funds for technology. The strength of support for school community libraries in small communities is tremendous and librarians have been able to gain financially from the generous support of local groups, especially in acquiring new technology.

**Management**

The school community library is administratively part of the school and therefore a component of the Department for Education and Children's Services. As such, the librarian is responsible to the principal for day to day, staffing and other administrative issues.

Acting as a policy body and providing additional funds from the Council allocation, the Local Library Board of Management comprises representatives of the school, local community and local Council. The Board of Management develops library policy in the areas of non-school service delivery, opening hours, special programmes, promotion of the library and may provide funds for community library support staffing or additional materials in the library.

The Libraries Board of South Australia provides funds to the school community library within a formula and has a set of guidelines within which school community libraries operate. The Libraries Board of South Australia administers funding and the services of PLAIN Central Services in relation to the *Libraries Act 1982* (as amended) and the *State / local government Public Libraries and Community Information Agreement 1/7/95 to 30/6/2000*. This agreement reflects the de-regulated relationship between the two spheres of governments and serves as a mechanism through which local decisions can be successfully made and achieved.

In order to create one point of reference for school community libraries, and to provide advice to the co-operant partners, a school community libraries Committee was established and is active in its advocacy, advice and support of these libraries. Representatives from the Department for Education and Children's Services, PLAIN, the Libraries Board of South Australia, School Community Librarians, and the Chief Librarians Association of SA (representing local government) participate in the committee. Given the changing nature of our services to include the vocational

education sector, agreement has been reached to increase the membership to include a representative of the Institutes of Technical (Vocational) Education.

### **What is needed to support school community libraries?**

Genuine commitment on behalf of all the stakeholders and participants is crucial to the success of school community libraries. This commitment must be demonstrated at the local level between the librarian, principal, local council and the community. It must also be evidenced at the state-wide level between the Libraries Board of South Australia, the local government Association, the Department for Education and Children's Services, the Department for the Arts and Cultural Development and the State Library of SA. In achieving and maintaining this genuine commitment to successful outcomes, all the stakeholders achieve their objectives of access, cost efficiency and quality.

Co-operative ventures need clear frameworks within which to operate. These do not need to be prescriptive as co-operative relationships mature beyond initial implementation, but must be clear, agreed guidelines which address the needs, outcomes, roles and responsibilities of all parties. These agreed principles and practices are the subject of the document *Guidelines for Operation - school community libraries in Rural Areas of South Australia* and are used in such cases as dispute resolution.

Linked to clear guidelines is the need for legal agreements, required should the unfortunate need arise and for the security of the co-operant parties. These legal agreements clearly state which agencies have entered into the co-operative arrangement and what their roles and responsibilities are in providing the service. In South Australia, the original agreements are still in place and although they are generally still relevant, some new developments have occurred which require their review and the drafting of a new model agreement.

Training and support services are essential to the success of these services. Trained as Teacher Librarians, the School Community Librarians accept the challenge of managing a service with a much broader brief than that for which they have been professionally trained. The role of public librarian is defined for these professionals early in their tenure at a school community library. They receive training from PLAIN and State Library staff in the functions of the public library system, the differing needs of the community, collection development, the local government environment, community information and other information services available. Staff at PLAIN also act as advisers and technical support to these librarians, while the public librarians' professional association, the Chief Librarians' Association of South Australia, also provides professional training and support to their membership.

It is also clear that the most successful school community libraries have a locally representative, enthusiastic and skilled Local Board of Management. With key individuals from the school and local communities who are active in their participation and promotion of the library, the school community library becomes a focal point for the community and acts as a facilitator to local programmes and a sense of local identity.

## **Role of PLAIN Central Services**

PLAIN Central Services provides centralised selection, acquisitions, cataloguing and distribution services to school community libraries, as well as training and support, particularly in the area of new technology.

The services provided by PLAIN are on-line so that the librarians are able to select materials for their public library collection from the computer database, have them ordered electronically, covered, catalogued and distributed without any further action on their behalf. PLAIN also provides electronic or hard copy catalogue records ready for adding to their catalogue.

The PLAIN system offers on-line inter-library loans between the 137 libraries in the state, as well as access to the State Library catalogue and databases. A state-wide delivery service ensures that materials are distributed to the requesting libraries with efficiency.

As the materials purchased for the public library part of the school community library service are funded by the Libraries Board of South Australia, details of these materials are available on the PLAIN database and stock can be transferred from one library to another. Thus, libraries are able to share stock around the state and to co-operate with neighbouring libraries so that they do not duplicate titles unnecessarily in a region, making very effective use of resources on behalf of the funding bodies. PLAIN also provides other database access, including the Internet, to school community libraries.

## **What are the benefits of Joint-Use Libraries in our experience?**

### **School students and teachers**

The school community receives the benefit of additional resources in their library which are easily accessible. If the school community library did not exist and the local Council was unable to fund a full community library service, a trip to the closest public library might have been prohibitive in terms of distance and public library services to support students may have been a box/crate service, delivering materials selected by central staff by post.

These additional resources are enhanced by the school community library's access to the PLAIN computer database and to the on-line inter-library loan service, accessing almost 2 million items around the state. Stand alone school libraries do not have on-line access to this system, and students are obliged to visit their separate public library to access these resources.

In addition to the inter library loan access via PLAIN, school community libraries have access to the collections and databases of the State Library and the PLAIN system, bringing a broad range of additional research materials and services to the school environment. The cost of each school purchasing the equipment and licences to these databases would be prohibitive, but by sharing them around the state and accessing them through the public library system, students and teachers are able to effectively enhance their information gathering. The PLAIN system is also beginning a program of



Internet access for public libraries which is relatively inexpensive and which the school community libraries are able to access as well as undertake training in its use.

School community library staff are able to access the training services of the Department for Education and Children's Services, PLAIN and the State Library, giving them wide scope for training opportunities and the capacity to provide excellent services to their constituents.

Pooled resources and co-operative partnerships allow the school library to provide a wider range of services and programs. Access to grant funds and special projects from the Libraries Board of SA and other funding bodies through the public library system, enables the school to develop curriculum and support activities beyond the scope of the stand alone school library. For example, funding was recently provided for Writers in Residence, creative song and play writing and health promotions through the State Library winning a grant and facilitating the project through rural libraries. School community libraries were able to participate in these programs, enhancing the capacity of the school library to develop the skills and abilities in their students as part of the broader community.

As a local community facility, the joint use nature of the school community library and the representation on the Local Board of Management ensures that the school library becomes a focal point in the community. This can manifest itself in relation to local promotion of the library and its services, in voluntary support for activities or, as in the case of the very remote Ceduna school community library, financially in the form of funded computers, programs or equipment. Significant community identification and 'ownership' of the library is evidenced.

Given the capacity for funds to be amalgamated, the library facility itself can be a vast improvement in joint circumstances rather than when operated as a stand alone service. The Strathalbyn school community library for example is about to be upgraded and re-developed with funds contributed by the Department for Education and Children's Services and the Council.

#### **Local communities**

The local residents of very small communities in rural and remote areas have effective access to library services through the school community library model. As with their student group, if these libraries did not exist, they would have had to fund very expensive stand alone library systems, travelled great distances to public libraries in larger towns (remembering that there are very few of these), or relied on some sort of box/crate service from a central agency.

The local community therefore, receives high quality services, universal access to the resources of the State, including the technological resources of the city areas and has a highly valued local community resource and focal point.

Again, through the pooling of financial, human and other resources, people in these small communities are able to be introduced to and access the emerging new technologies which would otherwise be cost prohibitive.

## What are the challenges?

With any co-operative venture there are challenges, negotiations and compromises.

Firstly, the real contributions of each partner are not evident from the school community libraries balance sheet. It is true that the school and Council contributions are easily identified within the school community library budget, but not withstanding the materials allocation of the Libraries Board of South Australia, the actual Libraries Board funds spent on supporting and servicing these libraries do not appear on each library's balance sheet and can be forgotten. This is something that the school community libraries Committee is addressing, to ensure that the 'balance sheet' is fair and reflective of the contributions of all partners.

Following on from this is the need for all of the stakeholders to be cognisant of their roles, responsibilities, benefits and inputs. While these are clearly understood and met, the school community libraries operate very successfully. There exists therefore a large training and promotional role for PLAIN staff and the school community libraries Committee as the annual turn over of school principals occurs. This is also the case for the School Community Librarian as new members of the Local Board of Management are nominated or a new Councillor or Mayor is elected to office. Thus, the training and development component of this model is an ongoing responsibility and requires a multi-faceted approach to all stakeholders.

The appointment of new School Community Librarians also requires training and support, as previously discussed. Whilst this is not a disadvantage to the model, it is a challenge in terms of keeping 46 librarians skilled in the range of concepts and tasks associated with public librarianship in addition to their role as teacher librarian.

The librarians themselves would acknowledge the challenges associated with serving two client groups, one of which is a defined group with, to some extent predictable, known needs in relation to their curriculum. The library professionals and their staff must balance this against the often unpredictable and more general needs expressed by the local community. It is comfortable for the librarians to deal with those services, users and collections for which they have received professional training and it is challenging for them to develop new skills and knowledge, building on their existing librarianship.

Critics of the school community library model often cite the disinclination of adult users to return to the school yard to access full library services. We have discovered that the success of these libraries is in the marketing of the services, careful placement of the facilities within the school grounds and the use of local Council and other community leaders as 'champions' of the services. With key local community members being part of the Local Board of Management, the community have role models to follow into the facilities.

Many of the libraries are situated near the outer perimeter of the school grounds, often with doorways very close to the entrance of the school and others are very well signposted. As these communities are often very small, there are very few community facilities in their towns and thus the school community library enjoys the active support

of the community as one of a very few publicly funded community 'places'. This focus increases the likelihood of locals using the service.

Isolation is another issue for these libraries. Whilst this would be an issue (and is) for stand alone libraries *or* school community libraries, nonetheless it is important to explore in relation to our network. Staff and the key local stakeholders feel isolated from the decisions and developments of the metropolitan areas. This must be addressed by effective communication, often now assisted by information technology. Regular meetings, training and communication ensures that the staff and users of the most remote services are able to participate in shaping the direction and services of the State's public and school community library network.

As is the case in many western countries, public sector reform is being undertaken in South Australia. This reform, ruthless in some cases and incremental in others, means that the school community library, as a service provided by co-operant public sector agencies, sits in the centre of a range of activities and reforms currently underway. The Department for Education and Children's Services is undergoing a significant 'downsizing' and the effects of this may be felt in relation to the school support time available in the libraries and the closure of small schools. The community support time, which is the subject of the formal Education, Arts and Libraries Board agreement is not within this reform agenda. In addition to this, local government is about to be reformed in our State, potentially halving the number of Councils. The support, siting and services of school community libraries in the future will be shaped by these developments which demonstrate the changeable nature of services, especially when they 'belong' to co-operating agencies.

### **The future for school community libraries in South Australia**

It is clear from current initiatives around the state that the joint use model is being embraced further afield than was originally envisaged. Not only are schools and Councils with independent services beginning to explore the possibilities of new joint facilities, but existing school community libraries are also looking more widely to encompass further economies of scale with new partners, such as the Institutes of Technical and Further Education. Several proposals are currently under development and the school community library Committee is establishing a new membership to include the Institute sector, in order to provide the best advice to the Libraries Board, the Department for Education and Children's Services and the local government Association, regarding these proposals.

As highlighted earlier, the possibility of Council amalgamations and school closures will impact on school community libraries. Whilst it will be important to uphold the basic principles of access, quality and cost efficiency during these reform processes it is highly likely that the shape, size and face of a number of the school community libraries currently in our network may change.

Technology will play an increasingly important role in the delivery of services through school community libraries. Already a number are acting as access points to university courses through dial-up access to university computers. It is very likely that this role

will continue to develop, making school community libraries local telecentres or telecottages, where the local community will access on-line education and training, will be able to telework/telecommute and will access other on-line services. Of particular interest in South Australia is the State Government's new Electronic Services Business (ESB) project, where government and private sector services will be made available through computer kiosks in local agencies. Interactive and transaction based, it is envisaged that the ESB will facilitate payment of accounts, registration and licensing and information seeking. It is critical that school community libraries take up the role of introducing this service to their local communities and of training the community in its use and benefits.

On a very practical level and in the near future, the new model school community library agreements will be developed in order for there to be a starting point when Council amalgamations occur. Revision of the model Local Board of Management Constitution will also occur.

While school community librarians continue to administer two separate materials budgets for school and public library materials, there exists a capacity for further efficiencies and resource sharing. A pilot is about to be established to ascertain the potential savings to the school by joint purchasing through the PLAIN computer system and through the contracted book supply agreements of PLAIN, with significant discounts. Decision making regarding materials supply has been devolved to principals and therefore, should the pilot be successful, the opportunity to join PLAIN will be made available to all schools, even beyond school community libraries.

### **In conclusion**

Established through the economic need to provide accessible, cost effective and high quality library services, the school community library model has proved successful in South Australia. Whilst it originally started out to address the needs of small communities in rural areas, the model is gaining in popularity throughout both metropolitan and rural areas and is the subject of considerable interstate and international interest.

What makes them work in our state? Commitment to the concept at a political and central level underpins the support services provided to these libraries. Local commitment to the demonstrated benefits and outcomes is also evidenced. Access to the technology of the PLAIN system, the support mechanisms put in place and to the resources of the whole state, ensure that even the smallest library can offer equitable access for its residents. Technology offers us the opportunity to make these services to a higher level of service and functionality.

The need to address sparsely represented populations in our state drove the development of these library services, but what has occurred is that the benefits of pooled resources have been demonstrated, the political and community accountability proven and they are now serving as a model for others.



## **A FULLY INTEGRATED COMMUNITY AND SCHOOL LIBRARY IN SWEDEN**

Ms Christina Stenberg, Swedish Librarians' Association

Skinnskatteberg is one of Sweden's smallest municipal regions with 5,300 inhabitants. Its total area is also modest, only 660 square kilometres. You can go by car between the most distant villages in about half an hour. Skinnskatteberg, with large forests all around, is situated 170 km northwest of Stockholm.

For many years, a large state-owned sawmill and board factory was the dominant industry, employing 600 people. The board factory recently closed down due to low profitability and today many former employees are commuting long distances to their new jobs.

With regard to population, Skinnskatteberg is dominated by unskilled workers, among them a large group of Finns who moved there in the 1960s when there were plenty of jobs in the region. The pensioners are a large and growing population in the municipality, whereas young people are moving to the major towns in order to continue their studies and are returning to a limited extent only. At present a group of about 100 Kurdish refugees have settled in the municipality. The main centre of Skinnskatteberg has 2,800 inhabitants and the three other village areas with a school and library have a local population of 200 to 700 individuals.

### **The library as a standard municipal service**

All municipalities in Sweden have a community library. It is a voluntary undertaking for any municipality to offer library services. The standard varies extensively since there is no government ordinance to regulate their activities. In 1990, Sweden witnessed the first municipality to recommend a complete closure of its library services and consequently the municipality's main cultural activity. The politicians claimed that this was necessary in order to make funds available for other purposes.

There is, however, a field of public service where the standard varies even more, and that is within the school library sector. In Sweden, learners attend comprehensive school between the age of seven and sixteen. This is a joint school for all children who are not, due to handicaps, placed in special schools. Although the comprehensive school is state-controlled, only one sentence in the School Statute refers to the school library. Nothing is mentioned as to size, staffing or media.

### **Insufficient reading ability despite 9 years of schooling**

In the 1970s several alarming reports indicated that pupils were leaving the comprehensive school without the ability to read and understand texts. Many people were shocked at this and the concept of functional illiterates was coined. How could it be possible that pupils who had attended school for nine years and who did not suffer from disabilities, had not managed to learn to read? This resulted in a violent debate in the press with claims that the school had failed in its most important task.

Why this incapability in a country where the standard of living is among the highest in the world? None of its children need to starve any more, be cold or become exhausted due to hard work before and after school. Why then, these inferior results? Even though there have been subsequent studies which at least partly, corrected the first alarming figures, schooling does not automatically constitute a guarantee of mental and intellectual development. Was the explanation that new media with an immense penetration impact was having a negative effect on children's achievements in school?

In Sweden, far away in the woodlands where there was no literary tradition, children did not automatically become ardent readers of books, parallel with their increased material standards. Those people who were concerned about this began to realise that new methods were required in school in order to create a counter-movement which could put a stop to the increasing hours spent watching TV and videos; a counter-movement which would improve achievements at schools.

Schooling has therefore been subject to extensive debate in Sweden and some new ideas, assimilated into the curriculum, were introduced in 1980.

### **The new curriculum**

In the new curriculum the role of general literature was strongly emphasised. The instruction in Swedish as a language, as well as other subjects such as history and geography, were to be taught through extensive use of general literature. Thus, when the curriculum was introduced in the schools it created a great demand for a varied supply of general literature and a need for individuals who were well acquainted with child and youth literature.

The new curriculum also emphasised that students were to use explorative and investigative techniques in their studies. One should no longer learn everything from *one* special textbook, but collect facts from different sources. The students were to compile and critically examine the facts and the information they obtained. For this purpose they needed access to numerous books, but also to newspapers and magazines.

Few school libraries in Sweden were equipped to cope with the requirements of this new curriculum. Thus many schools found it necessary to approach the public library to explore various ways to cooperate. The public library offered a large and varied supply of books to which the school needed access and there were also library staff who could offer children the appropriate assistance.

### **Proposal for a fully integrated community and school library**

In the 1970s, in our municipality of Skinnskatteberg, there was a low standard community library and an equally low standard school library. The groups responsible for these libraries decided to do something about this. Since this initiative coincided with the debate about the new school curriculum, they also discussed the school's increasing need for library services.

The idea of having a joint library for the school and the inhabitants of the municipality had, for a long time, been cherished by certain politicians. Thus, it was up to the school board and the cultural committee to survey their plans and intentions and to find out if there were possibilities of reaching agreement.

### **The requirements of the school**

Although the school needed access to larger supplies of books, newspapers and magazines through the community library, school teachers were concerned that in a shared or integrated library, too much of the literature needed by the school would be borrowed by the adults in the municipality. Therefore the school was unwilling to agree to all of the school's library books being lent to the public. Fast and easy access to the library was an important precondition so students and teachers wanted to have the collection under the school roof. The School Board also hoped that an integrated library would become a meeting place for both young and old in Skinnskatteberg.

The old community library attracted, first and foremost, well educated adults. There was a lack of interest among many adults for what children did at school and the visits by parents were few and infrequent. It was considered that the library could possibly become a bridge between the school and parents by attracting the parents of school children to come closer to the school through the library.

### **The primary interests of the Cultural Committee**

Why should the Cultural Committee and the public library agree to a joint library?

It was recognised that *all* children attended the school and that the public librarians would be able to reach the children who had never been taken to the library by their parents. The Cultural Committee was conscious of the possibility that certain groups of adults might experience a joint library as being 'messy' but decided to give the children first priority.

### **A fully integrated library**

In 1982, the fully integrated library was complete and ready. It was connected to the school although its main entrance opened towards the major residential area in the village. The Cultural Committee paid the rent for 700 square metres of the large library, and, to begin with, the school paid for 20 hours per week of the librarian's salary. From 1986 the school paid for a full-time librarian's salary. Other staff were one cultural/library manager, one librarian and two clerical employees.

In 1990, the Cultural Committee grant for media was SEK 390,000. The school contributed SEK 72,000, which is equivalent to SEK 123 per child. This allowance was also used to meet the media requirements of the three other smaller integrated libraries in the rural village schools.

The school administration cut down on their educational aids allowance in order to allocate funds to the library instead. This was entirely in accord with the objectives of the curriculum.

**Daily library routines**

How does an integrated library function under everyday conditions?

There are approximately 600 school children in all of Skinnskatteberg, 170 of whom attend the rural schools. These small village schools are visited once a month by the librarian who brings new books. The librarian reads aloud from the books and the children report what they have been reading since the last visit. In the junior and senior level classes of the central school, half an hour per week is set aside for library visits. This means that half the class will come to the library one week and the other half the following week. These fixed library hours are, to a large extent, scheduled between 8h00 and 10h00 in the morning because after 10h00 the library is open to public visitors. Thus, the school has exclusive use of the library for two hours.

The permanent class teacher always accompanies the children when they visit the library. In most cases, the librarian is also there when they come during their fixed book-loan hours. The children start by discussing the new books which the librarian is particularly eager to introduce to them. Sometimes the children also have a book they want to show and recommend to their classmates. At times the presentation of books is replaced by exercises which teach the children to find their way around the library.

The teacher and librarian cooperate in order to make this library education as meaningful as possible to the children. They are asked to assist with reshelving the books which other children have borrowed, or to collect books for book crates which will be placed in institutions. The children do this using author and title lists prepared by the librarian. It increases their motivation considerably if they can be library assistants for a while instead of just having library instruction. Half of the effective time of the lesson the children spend on book loans and, in principle, they are free to borrow what they want. First and foremost they borrow books for reading at school, but when this is done they select the books they want for leisure-time reading. There are no restrictions on the number of books they may borrow. The most eager children soon find that it is better to take only a few at a time.

One of the major gains of having an integrated library can be seen particularly during class visits to the library. Many pupils manage on their own and find lots of books which they would like to read. On the other hand, in every class there are pupils who listlessly leaf through the books, sighing when they don't find anything to interest them. This is when the teacher and librarian together try to find something that would suit these children. The teacher is able to assess the pupil's reading ability and perhaps also knows a little about his or her personal interests. The librarian, on his/her part, knows the essentials of the literature involved. Together they try to locate something for the child which could stimulate his/her urge to read, irrespective of whether the subject be dinosaurs or something about love.

**Close co-operation with teachers**

Every week, the librarian meets with a teacher representative from each of the junior, intermediate and senior levels of the school. At their weekly meeting they check the lists of children's books to be purchased and discuss what subject fields need further development. The teachers inform the librarian if there are new plans within the



different theme areas in order to give him/her sufficient time to replenish the literature on the subject or to borrow the relevant books from the county library at Västerås.

Seeing that the Skinnskatteberg library is comparatively small, they frequently have special-literature assistance from Västerås. Skinnskatteberg has participated in a major development project on information searching, together with other municipalities in the county. The project leader was a librarian in Västerås and a state subsidy was received from the Cultural Committee for the acquisition of computers and telefax equipment.

Of special importance to older pupils is the need to obtain information for the special projects they are working on. They choose subjects such as tropical forests, embryo diagnostics, gene manipulation and other subjects in which the latest research data is of real interest. In these cases, the librarians search for articles on the computer database using keywords. The database then displays the titles of the magazines in which these articles are to be found. An inquiry is sent to Västerås and, at best, the article may be returned via the fax in 5 minutes. To a small library it is of special importance to procure technical equipment enabling it to use the resources of the county library and other special libraries.

Since the integrated library has invested in a large supply of reference books, there is always something to be found on the shelves when the school children come. Increasingly, they become more skilled in ordering information documents and in specifying what they need so that the librarian can find it quickly when searching the database.

### **The municipal school plan**

The Swedish Parliament recently adopted a resolution which revised the allocation of responsibility within the school system. Up until then the school was characterised by central control even in matters of detail. Although there is still central control concerning the overriding objectives of the school, each municipality must draw up a school plan indicating how educational activity is to be carried out at the local government level in order to achieve the objectives of the curriculum. This plan must be devised in such a way that it constitutes an adequate basis for follow-up and evaluation.

The *School Plan* in Skinnskatteberg has recently been completed and it expressly states that the profile of the school is to be centred on culture and environment. I quote from the *Plan* on the subject of culture:

*Cultural work within the school is to build mainly on the pupils' own efforts in active creating under expert guidance (e.g. the Local Arts and Crafts Association, authors, musicians, artists).*

The library too, plays an important role in the cultural work of the school.

The *School Plan* also states, under the heading 'Library', that the standard is high in our integrated libraries and that the integrated library has an important function to fulfil in the school, particularly regarding educational aids in a wider sense. In conclusion, it

establishes that the future objective will be to maintain the same high standard with regard to the library's role at the instructional level.

### **Action plans for the different school levels**

In addition to the *School Plan*, which is an important overarching document stating the community's intentions in Skinnskatteberg's schools, there are a number of Action Plans for the main areas of the activity.

For a long time the librarians have been working on Action Plans for the library. When the Plans for the junior and the intermediate levels have been completed, the most important part of the work will have been done. All discussions between librarians and teachers about how the children should use the library have been highly rewarding, even when there has not been agreement about everything.

The time at the disposal of the Skinnskatteberg librarian is limited, even though 40 hours is generous in comparison with most school librarians in Sweden. However, participation by the librarian in evening meetings with parents was one of the preferences expressed by many teachers although it proved necessary to restrict this to a certain extent. Thus the Action Plan states that the librarian must always participate in the Class 2 parents' meeting during the autumn. At these meetings, teachers invite parents to participate in a training programme for reading using the Belfield method. Using this method, parents simply listen to the child reading from a book of general literature for 15 minutes a day. This is repeated every evening over an extended period, preferably three weeks. At the parents' meetings, the teacher and librarian inform the parents about this method, show them the books which they plan to use and give the parents an opportunity to select books.

Action Plans include rules because when children visit the library on their own a game of chess can be more tempting than the books. It is a question of persuading everyone to visit the library more frequently but at the same time ensuring that the library is not converted into an assembly room for school children. In winter in particular, it can prove difficult to accommodate all those pupils who have an hour free or a break after lunch and who want to be in the library. There should still be enough peace and quiet to enable visitors to work undisturbed even when there are children in the library.

### **Exhibitions**

On the whole, Skinnskatteberg is content with the way things have developed. Over a period of 10 years, the school management, teachers, pupils and the librarians have shaped the integrated library into something positive. In addition to library activities, the librarian also administers theatre performances, concerts and visits by authors, as well as exhibitions. The librarians are particular about taking care of the school children's works of art and exhibit them in the library. What is most inspiring is when a professional artist visits and the pupils are inspired by the display of the artist's works. The library is then provided with a spontaneous pupils' exhibition of their interpretations and expressions as a reaction to the artist's previously exhibited works.

To the pupils, it is meaningful to be able to exhibit their work on other subjects in the library. One of the most successful exhibitions was of the Class 9 pupils' projects dealing with Swedish authors. In the library their work is used when the librarians talk to elderly people about books.

### **Threats**

Unfortunately there is a threat to the future existence of Skinnskatteberg's integrated library. In Sweden there is much talk about saving on public expenditure. As indicated earlier, there are even municipalities which are contemplating closing down their municipal libraries. To those who are working with children and libraries, this idea of 'saving' is incomprehensible. Could it actually be that a country like Sweden, with the world's highest taxes, cannot afford to invest in their children? Is it reasonable to erase in haste what has been built up over a 10-year period?

Even in Skinnskatteberg, requests were made to cut down on library activities. On those occasions, luckily for the library, all teachers, even the pre-school teachers, objected vehemently. The first savings attack was fended off quite successfully but it is uncertain what will happen in the future.

### **Conclusion**

A lively and vital cultural life in any community brings strength and inspires faith in the future. To small municipalities, it is important to make cultural investments which will attract people to move there. Furthermore, we have to teach children the meaning of 'quality' in the cultural environment. Libraries are vital in providing young people with the power to resist violence and injustices in our society today. If we want our children to become independent, sensitive and sensible individuals, we have to show them that they are worth investing in. For municipalities and schools to invest in children, libraries and books is to invest in the future!

## BASIC INFORMATION SCIENCE: BRIDGING THE GAP IN NAMIBIA

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### Introduction

Namibia has gained experience in addressing the dilemma of scarce and unequally distributed resources in school libraries, especially in view of the demands of the new education system introduced after Independence. In order to fully understand the rationale behind this initiative, a few introductory remarks on the historical development of library and information services (LIS) in Namibia and the state of affairs at the time of Independence are useful.

### Historical overview

#### 1. Pre-independence

Library development in Namibia is very much a product of the successive political and constitutional orders of the past.

A library service for South West Africa (SWA) was established in 1965 as a direct result of the findings and recommendations of the Van Wyk Commission on Libraries in SWA in 1963. Paragraph 19 of the subsequent SWA Library Service Ordinance and Regulations, 1968, stipulating that:

*... all library services provided by the (SWA) Library Service .... shall be provided separately for whites and non-whites*

paved the way for segregated LIS. This situation was aggravated by Proclamation AG 8 of 1980, transferring legislative powers to representative (ethnic) authorities in respect of, *inter alia*,

*matters having as their object the promotion of art and culture in relation to the particular population group, including the establishment, creation, maintenance and management of, and control over ... libraries ... and any services in connection therewith.*

The country was divided into eleven education authorities along ethnic lines, namely the administrations for the Caprivians, Coloureds, Damara, Herero, Kavango, Nama, Owambo, Rehoboths, Tswana, the Whites and National Education. The Department of National Education served schools established by the Department and rendered advisory services on request to schools established by the Kavango and Tswana Representative Authorities. Revenue raised by way of taxation was also distributed along ethnic lines, resulting in well-equipped media centres in former white schools.

It is therefore not at all surprising that research done by the Department of Information Studies of the University of Namibia (UNAM) towards the end of the 1980s, found an alarming maldistribution of school library services and facilities in the country. Of the 1,153 schools in existence at the time of Independence, 66 fell under the Administration for Whites. In 1988, this Administration boasted fully-fledged media centres in 16 secondary, 42 primary and 3 special schools under their jurisdiction, representing 55,9% of the existing



school library or media centre facilities at the time. The remaining 10 education authorities thus shared 44,1% of existing facilities (Tötemeyer and Stander, 1990:18a).

These former white schools also kept 71% of the 330,000 books available in Namibian school libraries, reflecting a ratio of 13,6 books per learner as against a ratio of 0,3 in the remaining 10 education authorities. This trend was also reflected in the distribution of other media like periodicals, audiovisual materials, etc. (Tötemeyer, 1995:3). Thus, only about 19,2% of all Namibian learners and 26,5% of the teachers had access to library resources (Tötemeyer and Stander, 1990:37).

Only 4,6% mainly former white, Namibian schools had a full-time library teacher, while the remaining schools had to settle for either a part-time teacher or no teacher. A few were lucky to at least have a teacher who attended to the library in his/her spare time. Some principals appeared to be reluctant to 'waste' staff on the library. In one school, provided with a properly furnished library with 5,000 books in stock and a qualified school librarian on the staff, the library was locked up while the teacher had to teach English (Tötemeyer and Stander, 1990:31-2).

The availability of facilities was as unequal as the distribution of books. The former white schools and a number of others had fully furnished libraries/resource centres. The fact that all new schools were provided with a well-designed library as part of their standard provision did not mean that these facilities were utilized for this purpose. Where no stock or no teacher was available or where the library was needed for a different purpose, it was either locked or used as a classroom or storage facility.

The Department of National Education started in 1985 with the provision of movable library cabinets to schools without libraries. With aid from various donors since 1990, this project could be expanded substantially. The advantages of these cabinets are that they can be moved from classroom to classroom and be locked up at the end of the day. They could also eventually be used as shelving in a library. Where no facilities exist for community libraries, such cabinets could also come in very handy.

Different syllabi were used by the few authorities that did offer book education. The syllabus used by National Education was based on that of Groenewald<sup>11</sup>, the Administration for the Nama used the Cape Education Department Syllabus and the Administration for Whites offered well-developed modules referred to as Media Science. However, the subject was quite often not taught or, in some cases, taught by teachers lacking any skills in this regard. Book Education was limited to less than 100 of the existing schools (Klynsmith, 1992:522).

The new government thus:

*inherited a number of fragmented, uncoordinated, in many cases inadequate, and geographically unequally distributed library and information services in Namibia* (Tötemeyer, 1993:12).

<sup>11</sup> E.C. Groenewald of the former Transvaal Education Department's Media Services.

## 2. Post-independence

After Namibia's independence, these education authorities were gradually incorporated into the Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport. All previously existing library services (including Public and Government Libraries and the National Library) were united under the Division of Library Services within the Department of Culture.

Provision was also made for library components, headed by Deputy Directors for Culture, on the establishment of the then six educational regions, in line with the Government's philosophy of decentralization. When this Ministry split into the Ministries of Education and Culture (MEC) and Youth and Sport in 1991, the position of Library Services remained intact.

In order to assist Government to formulate an information policy, eventually to be embodied in legislation, the then Deputy Minister of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport in 1990 instituted what was called the Coordinating Council Sub-committee for Library and Information Services.

Within a month of being charged with this formidable task, the sub-committee presented its Broad Policy Statement, recommending, *inter alia*, that:

- Urgent further attention be given to existing draft legislation; and
- A library and information network, consisting of a Statutory Advisory Council, a National Library, departmental libraries, school/community libraries, public/community libraries and a subsidy programme for private libraries, be established under the Ministry.

The issue of whether school libraries should fall under Culture or Formal Education was fiercely debated, with school librarians mainly in favour of their retention under Formal Education. In the end consensus was reached for a unified structure to strengthen the bargaining power of the service.

The Sub-committee further submitted recommendations in respect of salary and staffing structures and long term project proposals for school libraries.

These proposals could unfortunately not be implemented due to the fact that the Coordinating Council was never constituted. This forum did, however, contribute towards unity within the library and information fraternity, while the recommendations laid the basis for future deliberations.

A 1993 seminar on the Coordination of Information Systems and Services in Namibia, sponsored jointly by the German Foundation for International Development (DSE), the MEC and UNAM, refined and expanded on the above recommendations.

It can confidently be said that these efforts directly influenced the formation of a *Directorate of Library and Archives Services* within the Department of Adult Basic Education, Libraries, Arts and Culture in 1994. It also prompted the former Minister of Education and Culture to appoint a three-member committee to finalize library and legal deposit legislation, estimated to be promulgated towards the middle of 1996.

Early in 1995 the Ministry of Education and Culture was again split into two Ministries, namely Basic Education and Culture (MBEC), responsible for primary and secondary education and higher education, vocational training, science and technology. The Directorate Library and Archives Services has remained with the MBEC, while the new Ministry is responsible for the libraries of the teacher training colleges, vocational colleges and the University and Polytechnic of Namibia. This development may once again have a negative influence, especially on school library development, since those institutions responsible for the training of school librarians are once again the responsibility of another authority.

### **Basic information science: the development of a new syllabus**

#### **Background and implementation**

Post-independence changes in the education system included a switch to English as the medium of instruction, the phasing out of the hitherto generally used syllabi of the Cape Education Department and the implementation of a more Namibianized curriculum at junior secondary level. To make subjects more relevant to the Namibian situation and to prepare learners for the transition to the proposed IGCSE (International General Certificate of Secondary Education) curriculum at senior secondary level, syllabi for all subjects had to be rewritten. Although most of the existing syllabi could be adapted relatively easily, those for History, Religious Instruction and Basic Information Science (BIS) had to be either rewritten or developed from scratch.

In view of the almost total lack of library collections in most junior secondary schools and because all known syllabi for book education or media user guidance depended on access to or knowledge of a library for successful teaching, the working group for school libraries decided to concentrate on information such as: where to find information, how to retrieve information from whatever source is available and how to use information (Klynsmith, 1992:523).

BIS, a compulsory non-promotional subject, was implemented in Grades 8-10 between 1991 and 1993, after a series of in-service training courses for BIS teachers. One of the main obstacles during the implementation phase was ensuring the interest of unqualified or inexperienced school librarians and at the same time, convincing those experienced in the library field, to consider the value of this innovative approach.

We originally held one-week training courses, but found that it was impossible to transfer information and skills over such a short period. The following round of workshops was then handled differently. Only the first seven modules were dealt with. Groups of teachers had the opportunity to discuss the modules and plan lessons accordingly. After discussions and modification, the lessons were photocopied and distributed. At the end of the workshop a teacher could go home with a number of lessons already prepared and with the experience to apply the suggestions contained in the curriculum (Klynsmith, 1992:327-9).

In June 1992, the Ministry appointed curriculum panels to revise and supervise the implementation of syllabi. In January 1993, *ad hoc* working groups were appointed to assist with the preparation of new syllabi for primary schools and to revise the secondary syllabi.

The new BIS syllabus for primary schools and the revised syllabus for secondary schools are due to be implemented in 1997.

This curriculum is organized in such a way that at least the first 8 modules do not require access to a library or book collection. However, in those schools with well-developed library services the modules expose learners to alternative sources of information and offer exciting alternatives to a sometimes boring subject.

The fifteen modules eventually included, were arranged in the same order in which sources of information are likely to be encountered in developing communities:

- human resources such as elders, peers, community leaders, experts in the community;
- environmental sources such as nature, institutions in the community, historical or other places of interest, offices;
- textbooks in the schools representing fiction (readers), non-fiction (subject textbooks) and reference sources (dictionaries, atlases, telephone directories, etc.);
- religious books offering a variety of genres (even fiction!) and reference works in the form of concordances;
- newspapers, no matter whether they are old or new;
- magazines that can be collected with little effort;
- cuttings and pamphlets, mainly to supplement subject material;
- electronic mass media such as television and radio, of which the latter can usually be found in the remotest area;

Up to this stage there is little need for access to a library. Some of the remaining modules can also be offered without a library but are more meaningful if a library is available.

- Module 9, concentrating on library orientation, was originally put last, but later shifted to this position where it would be logically more appropriate. Schools with libraries may, however, even start with this module, while schools without a library should at least familiarize learners with the concept of a library.
- In modules 10-12, fiction, non-fiction and reference works are studied as sources of both information, learning and recreation.
- The remainder of the curriculum is then devoted to audiovisual and electronic media as sources of information, the history of recording, libraries and, finally, information as a phenomenon (Klynsmith, 1992:524-7).

One of the most exciting features of the BIS curriculum is the opportunity for a school to generate a substantial number of information sources that can be added to the existing stock or even form the nucleus of a future library.

In practice, various subject teachers can, in consultation with the BIS teacher, request learners to use any of the information seeking techniques for prescribed assignments or projects. The ease with which a learner finds the information, the resourcefulness in finding the information, the quality of information found and the way it is presented will all be an



indication of a learner's progress. The BIS teacher will, however, not be the only evaluator. The results will more often than not be reflected in the BIS curriculum application in other subjects and the general progress of the learner.

Exciting group projects can also be undertaken. The History teacher can, for example, request learners or groups of learners to collect information on the history of their town or area by way of interviewing elderly people or experts to collect oral history or collecting press cuttings, photos or articles about historical places. At the same time, the Geography class can, through observation and interviews, collect information on climatic conditions, fauna and flora and industrial operations. The language class can collect and record folktales, traditional stories and poems. All these results can eventually be combined in one unique and interesting resource for the library. A school can even reach an agreement with another school in one of the other educational regions, in South Africa or any other country, to undertake a similar project and eventually exchange publications. The possibilities are indeed endless!

## **Logic, scope and composition**

### **Logic**

Information is the major requirement for development in all spheres of life. Information is everywhere around us: in books and other published sources, but also in the environment, in the minds of people and at institutions.

BIS is specially aimed at helping learners to recognise various sources of information, to develop the necessary skills to retrieve the information they require and to use the relevant information objectively (Republic of Namibia, 1994:1). It also aims to foster a love and appreciation of reading, thereby developing a book culture in Namibia. BIS would therefore not only prepare Namibian learners to successfully meet the demands of a general certificate in secondary education curricula, but also help them to become productive citizens and responsible leaders and to participate successfully in the information-intensive work situation of the future.

### **Composition**

The modules as described above do not need to be offered in the order in which they are listed in the curriculum. Instead, presentation of a specific module will depend on the level of development of the learners and the availability of the various sources (Republic of Namibia, 1995:1-2).

Each module is presented on a single page divided into three columns and faced by a page carrying suggestions for lessons or methodologies to be used at different levels.

#### *Column 1: Modules and themes*

The modules indicate the *types of sources* learners are likely to encounter, while the themes list the various *forms* in which the sources may be found. It must however, be kept in mind that sources of information are not always found in isolation, e.g. fiction, non-fiction and reference works (modules 10-12) are treated separately but should also be included under textbooks (Module 3).

*Column 2: Learning contents*

This column represents those aspects that are important for the full understanding of each source of information and for the acquisition of the skills needed to retrieve information effectively from that source.

*Column 3: Learning objectives / basic competencies*

This column lists skills and attitudes required for becoming effective seekers and users of information, specifically those relevant to each type of source. So for example, the use of newspapers (module 6) will enable learners to develop the ability to read critically, or the use of religious books (module 4) will develop respect for books and correct handling skills.

*Facing page: Suggestions for lessons / methodologies*

These suggestions do not form part of the curriculum but are merely intended to guide teachers to differentiate between groups with varying levels of development and background in BIS, or to indicate a proposed progression corresponding with the progress of learners through successive grades (Republic of Namibia, 1995:4-6).

**Scope**

No indication is given of the suitability of any particular topic or sub-topic for a specific level or grade (Republic of Namibia, 1995:2). The emphasis is thus on the applicability of the syllabus to various levels or the availability of sources. After mastering the basic skills, learners should be given the opportunity to practice these skills in all subjects across the curriculum. BIS thus provides an ideal opportunity to integrate and coordinate the teaching programme.

The BIS period should therefore be used to identify various sources of information and to practice various retrieval methods, while the use of the information will be applied to subject projects.

**Prerequisites for successful implementation**

However sound the arguments put forward in favour of this innovative approach, its success cannot be guaranteed, being dependant on the following factors:

- sufficient enthusiastic, qualified or suitable teachers;
- provision for the subject on the time-table;
- financial provision;
- an awareness of the value of information in the education process;
- a general awareness of the necessity of reference work and reading for the success of the new learner-centred resource-based education approach;
- commitment on the side of the authorities to address the needs and the critical shortages and imbalances;

Problems or successes experienced in Namibia would obviously serve as valuable lessons for South Africa in its current stage of planning for the future. Some of the problems and their solutions are shared below.

### The teaching of BIS

It speaks for itself that teachers need to be placed in control of valuable and expensive collections, to organize and look after them, but also, more importantly, to make them available. Likewise teachers are needed to offer BIS, thereby providing access to information sources, knowhow on the retrieval and use of information, support to subject curricula and developing a reading and information culture among the leaders of tomorrow.

A Public Services Commission circular issued in 1987 provided for a certain quota of teachers per school based on the number of learners, with additional provision for one or more library teachers. Although not yet repealed, this circular is not adhered to anymore since the quota has in the meantime been adjusted substantially. MEC Circular 2/1995 provided guidelines for period allocation to teachers in secondary schools and specifically stated that library teachers:

*will obviously have a lower teaching load but will compensate for this with additional tasks related to their field.*

Out of sheer desperation, to cope with the lower quota, principals simply have no choice but to allocate increasing subject teaching responsibilities to the library teachers, leaving them with less and less time to attend to the school library. Those principals with an understanding of the value of the library try their best to solve this problem but some do not even consider the necessity of having a library teacher. It was also found that most of the more than two hundred teachers who have majored in School Library Science at UNAM and the Windhoek College of Education over the past ten years, are not employed in the library field, sometimes because they are needed elsewhere, but often because they are afraid of even mentioning their qualifications to the principal for fear of being made responsible for the library in addition to their other subject responsibilities.

The Formal Education section fortunately supported recommendations from Education Library Services in these respects. But just when we thought that we had the support of everybody in the Ministry, the National Institute for Educational Development (NIED) proposed that BIS be removed from junior secondary level in view of the fact that the curriculum is overcrowded in terms of the number of subjects and that it would be sufficient if it were taught at senior primary level only. The dilemma with this proposal is that now BIS will be implemented in primary schools in 1997 only. In the majority of schools without libraries learners have never been exposed to books or reference works. Very few teachers have the skills to guide learners in library use or to integrate their subjects with the library.

Currently no training in library science is offered to prospective teachers at colleges of education where all training of primary school teachers will take place as from 1996. In addition, School Library Science has been provisionally removed from the BEd degree offered by UNAM, meaning that the only way teachers can qualify as school librarians will be through the BA degree in Information Studies (to be offered by UNAM as from next year), but will probably have to follow this up with a post-graduate teaching diploma.

As a result of strong complaints by Library Services, with support from various Directorates within the Formal Education section, this recommendation was partially rephrased to read:

*In Grades 8-10, Basic Information Science is taught across the curriculum, and one teacher in the school should have the responsibility for training of the teachers in the use of the library, for supervising the learners' use of the library and for co-ordinating the cross-curricular teaching of Basic Information Science. Time should be set aside on a rotation basis from main subjects for each class to be taught those topics in Basic Information Science which do not integrate into specific subjects (National Institute for Educational Development, 1995:3).*

The outcome of further comments on this issue is still being awaited.

In order to improve the status of the subject and the teacher in the school environment, in 1995 participants at a seminar on the Educational Responsibilities of Libraries and Information Services in Namibia proposed that:

- the name of the subject be changed to Information Science;
- the person solely responsible for the school library be referred to as the school librarian; and
- the person responsible for teaching Information Science be referred to as the Information Science teacher;

These proposals still have to be ratified by the Curriculum Coordinating Committee attached to NIED.

### **Financial provision**

Despite all efforts and all signs of improved appreciation for the role of the library in the overall development process, financial provision has still not improved. For the past four years, Library Services have received less than one percent of the Education Budget. This allocation has to cover remuneration packages of library staff as well as the operational expenditure of head office components, 30 public libraries, the National Library, the Ministry of Education and Culture Resource Centre and the maintenance and development of libraries in 1,300 odd schools countrywide.

I must, however, add that various donations have been received over the past five years, without which Namibia's Library Services would not have survived. These donations have lead to the provision of at least 200 books each to a number of previously totally deprived schools and to the upgrading of some inadequate collections to a reasonable level. The Sub-division Education Library Services has embarked on various programmes to provide all secondary and senior primary schools with at least one set of encyclopedias each, to subscribe to as wide a variety of periodicals as possible on behalf of secondary schools, to provide schools without library facilities with modular units (in cooperation with donor agencies) and to gradually establish and/or expand basic library collections.

It is envisaged that, by the end of 1995 all formerly deprived secondary education, junior secondary and senior primary schools would have at least 200 books each.

With most of the emphasis on previously disadvantaged schools, the former well-stocked school libraries have unfortunately deteriorated to an alarming state, lacking relevant



sources to support the new medium of instruction or the new curricula. Lack of proper control due to the absence of full-time (or any) library teachers has also led to huge and unacceptable losses of existing stock.

Since 1993 the National Planning Commission has been coordinating inputs from various line Ministries with the aim of establishing a macro-economic framework within which more detailed economic projections and public expenditure ceilings would be proposed. The final document, the First National Development Plan or NDPI, is now in the process of being finalized.

It is generally accepted that projects not included in this document do not stand a chance of being financed during the next five years. The recommendations of various library seminars during the last five years have been included in this document and we are anxiously awaiting its implementation.

After many discussions, visits and circulars, Regional Directors, other regional office staff and principals seem to have become more aware of their responsibilities towards libraries and have realized the potential value of libraries for their respective communities or schools.

A committee assisted by a consultant from South Africa is in the process of finalizing draft legislation for legal deposit and for the establishment of a Namibian Library and Information Service. This will be followed by the drafting of a national information policy which we aim to have approved by Cabinet.

Hopefully the Government will then honour its expressed support for the development of LIS as part of the overall development plan of the country in more concrete ways. Until this happens, those in positions of authority who question the value or necessity of libraries or who regard them as a luxury are empowered to stifle library development, to block sufficient financial provision, to disregard the staffing needs and to consciously ignore or simply not think about the contribution of librarians in policy formulation (Marais, 1995:135).

## **Conclusion**

What lessons can South Africa learn from our experience? First of all, I think the curriculum for BIS could address South Africa's immediate problems of unequal library provision and especially shortage of resources in school libraries.

To avoid the same problems and pitfalls it would be useful for South Africa to see to it that library and information services are always part of, and included in, any development initiative. Make sure that you have allies in every part of the institution and organisation. If somehow excluded, do not try to argue with those that have compiled a document but rather refer your arguments to the highest authority possible.

Also try to ensure the retention of a school librarian on the establishment of all schools and the mechanisms for school librarians to be trained.

The ideal is, of course, to provide equal access and opportunities immediately. This is also demanded, and quite understandably so, by previously disadvantaged groups. Due to the immensity of the task, various interim measures need to be taken, all with the overall aim in mind to improve the current unsatisfactory situation.

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## **BRAZIL'S EXPERIENCES WITH MOBILE LIBRARIES**

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### **Brazil and basic schooling**

Brazilian schools face many difficulties, especially in so-called basic schooling (from 1st through 8th grade, the former grammar schools and high schools).

In a society of great social inequality, large numbers of the population avail themselves of public schools which are inferior and fail to meet their expectations. In a world where fierce economic competition relies more and more on cognitive abilities tailored to the production and acquisition of knowledge which need to be developed in childhood and adolescence, most of the population is at a disadvantage. Nothing is as important for the economic and social future of a country as the education of its children, its youth. The country's leaders need to pay greater attention to the quality of education instead of just concentrating on increasing the numbers of pupils enrolled.

Brazil's school-going population (age 7 to 14) was 28,1 million in 1993. Of these, 24,8 million were enrolled in regular junior schools; 1,2 million attended the '3 Rs' classes and 0,1 million attended high school. Two million were not attending school. Although the number of children not attending school is high it has been decreasing steadily as the school age population has increased more rapidly than the country's total population (1 percent per year). The number of school age children attending schools should reach 95% by the year 2000, nearing the current levels in developed countries.

The major problem is not a lack of schools but deficient teaching which has led to year repetition and truancy, one of the symptoms of Brazil's schooling system. In 1992, only 78 out of 1,000 students finished junior school in eight years and only 330 of them completed their basic studies, many of them after several repetition years.

### **Libraries: a tool to improve teaching**

There is an enormous shortage of libraries in Brazil's schooling system where roughly 4,000 public libraries try to meet the needs of a population of 150 million. The Brazilian government, through the Ministry of Education and Sports, is currently engaged in efforts to equip public schools with library services.

In 1994, the government started its *Reading Room* Program which aimed to distribute books to junior schools to develop basic reading skills. These Reading Rooms formed the embryos of school libraries. Today nearly 80,000 schools have them.

In the North East of Brazil, where most of the population lives below the poverty line, a project is being developed to establish *reading corners* in classrooms, supplied with complementary copies of books.

## Mobile libraries

There have been a number of experiments in this area, two of which are significant in terms of their effectiveness in meeting the demands and needs of a large percentage of information seekers at low cost.

The first are *vehicle libraries*. This program, although subordinated to the Ministry of Culture which is in charge of public libraries, aims to send books to localities and schools far from urban centres. Vehicle libraries provide an alternative to the traditional school library which has always been the responsibility of the Ministry of Education.

An adaptation of the vehicle library is the *library boat*. In areas such as the Amazon, where transportation is done mainly on rivers, this model has been used. Another mobile library model which we use is the *rack box*. This is a small collection of resources that can be shared between classes in the same school.

### Vehicle libraries

The vehicle library is a small van or bus adapted to carry books, catalogues and cardfiles to registered readers. When buses or larger vehicles are used there are small fixed desks inside or desks can be placed outside the vehicle wherever it parks.

The school programme comprises weekly visits, when students visit the vehicle library parked at their school. Teachers are given prior notice of the vehicle library's arrival so that they may include it in their class schedules and the students are able to draw books for use during the week. These books can be changed the following week when the vehicle library returns.

Teachers draw on material from the vehicle library in order to plan and develop their classes. The vehicle library scheme needs to be effectively promoted at the school so that teachers, students and personnel integrate their requirements with the schedule of the service. Taking into account the many needs of a school, it is likely that books requested will not always be available and for this reason requests for material which can be supplied in subsequent visits can be made over the telephone.

Vehicle libraries also need a centre where resources are controlled and maintained. After each visit to a school or community, damaged books that have been returned will be restored at the centre before going back into circulation.

In implementing the programme, the first step is to advertise the vehicle library and the services that are offered. This is done through loudspeakers attached to the vehicle which announce the free-of-charge service to all those who are entitled to it. The locations where the vehicle will park and lend books are also announced.

When dealing with rural schools, consultation with local inhabitants on the schedule is fundamental so that consultants know when to expect the vehicle library.

In addition to lending books, other materials and culturally stimulating activities related to book reading such as 'The hour of the tale', lectures and courses, are provided by



the vehicle library. Subjects of interest in the school curricula are debated, as well as other topics which may be introduced by the community, such as health care in general, ecology and environmental education.

Vehicle library projects are often developed by universities, especially through librarian training courses. These are university extension services tuned in to the needs of communities where students, i.e. future information and library workers, go through practical learning stages.

The rotation of learning resources in the vehicle library collection and the mobility of the library worker means that the cost of providing library services to remote school communities is greatly reduced.

### **Rack boxes**

Small wooden or metal cases on small wheels with internal racks which we call *rack boxes* are placed at schools or other sites and institutions, or places where people congregate. The learning resources in these boxes are supplied according to the profile and interests of their users (as informed by consultants) and they are periodically renewed. Rack boxes are used extensively in Brazil. In small schools with just a few classrooms the rack box can easily be pushed from one classroom to another.

Sometimes, in order to meet the primary goal which is to provide pupils with books, these rack boxes are replaced by bags or supports adapted to the school's requirements.

### **Enabling teachers in charge of libraries**

It is necessary for the person in charge of the mobile library to be suitably qualified. This is mandatory because they have a responsibility to stimulate the students' learning by developing their reading skills and the skills for easy access to information.

As a result of work done in leading government programmes in reading, schooling and library areas, we have prepared a course on *Distant Education to Qualify the Librarian Teacher*. In this course we have tried to remove the cultural idea that the library is only an appendix of the school. Instead we support the concept of the school library as an active centre for enabling learning which is entirely integrated into the activities of the classroom. Brazil's reality, bearing in mind the shortage of professionals in the librarian-training area, requires that tasks related to the school library have to be taken on by the teachers of each school. It is therefore necessary for these teachers to be 'armed' with appropriate qualifications.

The distance education course is developed to be used within the school itself and all teachers are invited to attend. It covers reading and the use of information, while being centred on the library. The course has been meeting expectations and teachers' needs and is enabling them to integrate the school library as an energising and enriching aspect of teaching and learning. A large number of schools have already used this course and their evaluation of the results is encouraging.

## Conclusion

Current pedagogical practices in Brazil are unacceptable. Teachers still use the monologue method in which information and knowledge are passed on as if the teacher were giving a speech. This limits the child's expression and inhibits their use of information and their creative development.

The school library programme advocated in this paper is against these practices. Teaching methodology must enable participation in the act of learning, based on information acquired through resource centres such as libraries and allowing learners to build their own knowledge. The unceasing search for knowledge, research in schools and participative planning, are basic steps to bring about a permanent renewal in the teaching-learning process. In this, the school library is indispensable, not only in relation to curriculum development but in the child's formation and the continuing education of the teacher.

In 1995 Brazil's current government announced its *Development plan for fundamental teaching and enhancement of teachers* which emphasises the importance of education as a whole and prioritises fundamental teaching to overcome the problems of historical backwardness dating from colonial times. Creating library services and enhancing those already in place using all means available - mobile or stationary - forms an integral part of the Development Plan.

## ALTERNATIVE MODELS BEING EXPLORED IN SOUTH AFRICA

### THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY LIBRARY CONCEPT

by Sophia le Roux, Media Services, Gauteng Education Department

#### Introduction

In 1982, the following statement appeared in an article in *American Libraries* (Cherry, 1982:24):

*An odd couple is living in Kansas City, Mo. The members have been together for a long time. They've shared the same quarters, taken money from the same piggy bank, even reported to the same boss. But their relationship has always been one of convenience rather than love, and most of the time they go their separate ways. On several occasions they've talked of splitting up, causing both glee and angst among their friends. Ultimately, economics has kept them together. The couple is the Kansas City Public Library and the Kansas City School District.*

This statement, referring to the then oldest and largest combined library system in the United States, the Kansas City Public Library, where seven of the thirteen branches were located in schools, clearly illustrates the controversy surrounding the combined school/community library concept.

What is a school/community library? The concept is known by different names, such as the school community library and school-housed public library, the name used in South Australia and Canada respectively (Dwyer, 1989:19) and Integrated library as it is called in Scandinavia (Koldenius and Nilsson, 1992:8). Other names used are combined school/public library (Woolard, 1980:v), joint-use (Amey, 1988:41) and dual purpose library (Jones, 1977:311).

For the purpose of this paper I will use the term *school/community library* to refer to an integrated school and public library service operating from a single building and situated within the physical boundaries of a school (Edwards, 1977a:6). In my paper I will attempt to provide answers to the following questions:

- What are the characteristics of overseas models of school/community libraries?
- What was the rationale for their establishment?
- What are the main problems experienced?
- Do overseas models of school/community libraries have any relevance for South Africa?
- Could overseas models be adapted to suit South African circumstances and what would be the prerequisites for success?

## International distribution and characteristics of combined models

The history of school/community libraries dates back to the nineteenth century (Steele, 1988:309) but new experiments with amalgamation are continuously being made (Amey, 1987:v). Dwyer (1989:20) makes mention of some 130 school/community libraries in the United States; 30 odd in the United Kingdom, many examples throughout Europe and even some in Papua New Guinea. Canada, with about 180 combined models, has more than any other country in the world, while in South Australia forty-six rural libraries and two<sup>12</sup> metropolitan school community/libraries have been established since 1977 (South Australia, 1990:17), making up a third of that state's public library network (Pukk, 1991:251).

Combined models are also found in Germany (Borchardt, 1988:121; Schmitt, 1992:92), in the Scandinavian countries (Koldenius and Nilsson, 1992:11; Olsson, 1991:6-7; Haapsaari, 1991:15; Stenberg, 1990:27) and in Iceland (Hannesdóttir, 1991:12). It would appear from the literature that the widest experimentation with combined models has taken place in the USA, Canada, United Kingdom, South Australia and the Scandinavian countries.

In the South Australian model of the rural school/community library, the public library collection is integrated with the school library collection and is located in the school building. Public library users, teachers and students have equal access to the facility. In terms of the South Australian *Guidelines*, school/community libraries could only be established in schools with a secondary enrolment (which has been found to be an average of 320 students) and in areas where the population served by the schools did not exceed 3,000. These areas were considered too small to support a public library financially (Amey, 1989:111; Gauld, 1987:75).

The two metropolitan school/community libraries are situated in newly developed, fast growing suburbs and are located in the middle of modern, all-purpose community centres. South Australia is the only place in the world where an official plan of library provision based on the school/community library concept has been implemented on a state-wide level and where the problems of combined library service have been approached systematically and comprehensively (Amey, 1989:111).

When a national questionnaire survey was carried out in Canada in 1979, 179 school-housed public libraries were identified, of which 77 (43%) were found in the Province of Alberta (Amey, 1979:1). Nearly 80% of these had been founded after 1970 (Amey, 1988:41). In 1987, the 77 had dropped to 67 (Amey, 1987:x). The average size of community served was a small town with a population of 3,685, although host communities ranged from small settlements of fewer than a hundred to city populations of over 50,000 (Amey, 1979:3). The largest number (31%) of school-housed public libraries were located in schools serving elementary grades through junior high school. The school populations varied from fewer than 50 pupils to school populations of up to 3,000 students. The average school size served was 392 students (Amey, 1979:4). Of the responding libraries, 28% reported that the library was run on a full-time basis

<sup>12</sup>

In this publication, Vanessa Little, in her paper on South Australia, provides current figures.



by either a public or a school librarian. About 20% of the libraries were administered by volunteers, secretaries, students or unqualified personnel (*School-housed*, 1979:20).

Dwyer (1987:99-100) reports that during a visit to the USA in mid-1976 he was struck by the great variety of conditions and absence of regulations pertaining to the establishment, management and operation of the school/community libraries visited. No pattern could be established concerning the ideal size of the community served. Some facilities were planned from the outset as joint ventures, while the majority made use of the existing facilities, sometimes with some additions. One party generally bore the greater financial burden, while very few operated with firm contractual agreements between the parties. Opinion was divided on the issue of the integration of collections and access to certain materials. No uniform, consistent or recommended staffing pattern could be determined.

In the United Kingdom, school/community libraries in the 1960s were mostly accommodated in existing school premises or were modest additions to existing schools. Although there were separate entrances for pupils and for the general public these buildings did not lend themselves to simultaneous dual use. Consequently, use by the public was usually confined mainly to evenings and possibly Saturdays and an occasional morning or afternoon. Such restrictions on hours of opening limited the size of community which could be served (Jones, 1977:313). From the 1970s, purpose-built dual-use libraries in new schools began to appear (Jones, 1977:316).

Although Finland has not yet embarked on a definite integrated public and school library programme, this country has a long history of school/public library co-operation. As the school system and public libraries shared the ideal of popular education, this in practice often resulted in the public library and the school being housed in the same building (Haapsaari, 1991:15). In Sweden, the integrated library is often located in the major residential area in the village, acting as a cultural institution and meeting place for the community (Stenberg, 1990:27).<sup>13</sup>

In Gotland, Sweden's largest island, which is sparsely populated with small schools with as few as 30 to 40 students at junior level, several integrated school and public libraries have been established (Olsson, 1991:6). Denmark, on the other hand, is a densely populated country with rather large schools. The recent decentralisation of the decision-making process to local authorities has led to the development of integrated models such as the so-called 'library-shop' in Odense, serving all 175,000 people in the community (Koldenius and Nilsson, 1992:11).

### Main reasons for the establishment of combined facilities

I have found that the establishment of school/community libraries can be attributed to the following major factors:

- increased pressure on government authorities to make better use of tax monies;
- decreased fiscal resources for library programmes;

<sup>13</sup> See also the paper by Christina Stenberg in this publication.

- the broadening of the community school concept;
- public awareness of the importance of library programmes;
- a growing demand for increased access to information in any format;
- historical backlogs in either school or public library services, combined with a growing demand for such services from the community;
- a pattern of settlement featuring greatly dispersed rural communities which are not able to sustain separate school and public library services;
- the construction of multi-purpose community centres, attempting to meet the community's needs for education, cultural activities, health, social services, etc., under one roof, particularly in newly developed and outlying suburbs;
- strong historical links between education and public library services in certain communities;
- incentives by national governments to make co-operative ventures possible;
- a trend, encouraged by the education authorities towards the community use of expensive school and college facilities, both for recreation and for purposes of lifelong learning, e.g. the establishment of community colleges.

### Problem areas

In her survey of 55 combined school/public libraries in the United States, Woolard (Lundin, 1981:142) found that the three main problems and weaknesses in respect of combined facilities were governance and management; reluctance of adults to use the facility during the school day for 'psychological' reasons or because of students' presence; and inadequate physical facilities.

In practically every country one of the main problems centres around the salary structure and working conditions of teacher-librarians and public librarians. Teacher-librarians tend to be paid more than their public library counterparts. In addition, if one considers the inequity in holiday benefits and working hours between the two professions, it is clear that this is a source of much unhappiness in many large combined operations (Amey, 1988:42; Chapman, 1979:241).

South Australia has largely avoided many of the inherent difficulties experienced in combined ventures by limiting itself mainly to small rural settings of around 3,000 or fewer people. Most facilities are located centrally and are accepted by the tight-knit local population. By having a simplified management structure in which a single person, the teacher-librarian, is put in charge, the problems brought about by a divided management are avoided (Amey, 1988:43). It is for this reason that Dwyer (Gauld, 1987:74) expressed the opinion that a joint service in a small rural community could be more easily provided and maintained with fewer problems than a service in a large metropolitan centre.

During an investigation of integrated public and school libraries commissioned by the Swedish National Council for Cultural Affairs, in an attempt to improve and develop library services, it was found that few combined public and school libraries fulfilled all

the criteria for integration. Although the aim of the study was to compare service and work methods in the different libraries and relate costs and benefits to political objectives, one problem encountered was that few integrated libraries had stated objectives for co-operation between the school and the library, making it very difficult to evaluate activities and performances (Koldenius and Nilsson, 1992:10).

### Relevance of combined models for South Africa

With regard to the South African situation, it is clear that many of the factors leading to the establishment of combined models are relevant. Here too, there are tremendous backlogs in public and school libraries in those communities disadvantaged through previous apartheid policies and practices. This situation exists in the rural areas as well as in the urban townships. Many of these communities will not be able to afford separate school and public library services.

In South Africa there also are small dispersed rural communities such as are found in Saskatchewan, the North West Territories and Yukon in Canada, as well as in South Australia and Scandinavia. There are, however, two important differences between the particular set of circumstances common to those communities and the rural communities in South Africa.

- Firstly, with the exception of Saskatchewan and the North West Territories in Canada and some communities in the outback of South Australia, these dispersed communities are homogeneous and close-knit, sharing the same culture and languages and being at the same level of literacy. The Anglo-American model of library provision adopted in those countries suits the majority of these communities. In South Africa, because of the previous apartheid era, members of small dispersed communities live in separate residential areas. This could pose a problem for the physical accessibility of a combined facility.

In addition, the information and cultural needs of the disadvantaged members of a community differ greatly from those of the more advantaged members of the same community. When the adult population is mainly illiterate or semi-literate there will be little incentive to use the public library. Provision will therefore have to be made to address the divergent needs of a community.

- Secondly, in most dispersed communities where the combined school/community model has been adopted, there has already been a core library service point (usually a functional school library) which could be upgraded to serve both the school and adult community. Unfortunately, this is not always the case in South Africa.

Amey (1988:43) argues that the case for and against school/community libraries is a complex one. He points out that any innovative social service is a risky business and that for this reason the basis for it and the social, historical, educational and administrative setting in which it has to function, must be carefully considered by open-minded planners. Many of the conditions impeding the rendering of school and public library services in Africa (Töttemeyer, 1992:6,8; Wehmeyer, 1991:3; Craver, 1985:37; Kedem, 1990:34) are also prevalent in South Africa and one of the problems is that the present library services are based on Anglo-American models (Van Zyl, 1991:3). It

would therefore be very unwise to adopt overseas models of school/community libraries indiscriminately. The facility provided should be the best and most reasonable response to a particular situation (Amey, 1988:42).

The establishment of school/community libraries is certainly not an inexpensive solution (Sedney, 1988:62). School/community libraries which are established to save money rather than to provide a better school and public library service are doomed to failure (Hallein, 1994:4). The relevant research literature is unanimous that no real savings are realized by combining facilities. The Swedish study report '*For better or worse*' - an investigation of integrated public and school libraries, also showed that the absence of accurate statistics on school libraries made it difficult to espouse the cost-effectiveness of the integrated model and to present exact cost figures and achievements.

In addition, it was found that factors such as level of objectives, user base, resource availability and claimed results seldom lend themselves to proper, correct measurement (Koldenius and Nilsson, 1992:8-9). 'Lower cost' should also never be confused with 'cheap'. Any good library service is going to cost a lot of money to establish and maintain and it would be quite dishonest for either school or municipal authorities to pretend otherwise, or to proceed in the expectation that the other partner will foot the bill for the two, as suggested by Crafford (1993:194). The most that either can expect is that in certain cases the cost for a combined venture would be somewhat less than for two separate library services, without sacrificing the quality of the service (Sheen, 1974:312).

The adoption of the school/community model will also not address shortcomings in the present delivery of school and public library services. The reasons for the under-utilization of school library services have already been studied by Kistan (1992) and Olen (1993). A major problem, however, is that the present school curriculum and teaching methods do not demand reading and research (Le Roux, 1992:40). In this respect, it is ironic that Information Skills is currently an optional non-examination subject in all provincial education departments, while in the proposed curriculum for adult basic education: *A National Adult Basic Education and Training Framework: Interim guidelines* (South Africa. Department of Education, 1995:9), Language Communication (which to a great extent overlaps with Information Skills) is considered a fundamental skill for adults to function effectively in society. Furthermore, the pre-service and in-service training of teachers to include the application of information skills across the curriculum also needs to be addressed if any school and public library services are to be fully utilized in the future.

With the establishment of the new non-racial provincial library services and local authorities a new era in the delivery of school and public libraries has dawned. The provision of school and public library services will no longer be subjected to ideological factors but will be based on the information needs of the community at large, irrespective of race. Accelerated urbanization, changing community needs, a high priority on formal, informal and non-formal education, scarce financial resources and a revision of functional criteria will all be determinants directing the future rendering of these services. New visions could provide many new ideas, new structures and new relationships leading to exciting new models of service delivery (Daniel, 1994:35).



Tötemeyer (1984:62) points out that only a new generation into which the reading habit has been inculcated in schools can reverse the downward pattern of public library use. The young school-going population should be exposed to the value of information while still at school (University of South Africa, 1990:35). In order to address the problems of under-utilization of public libraries by the disadvantaged communities, school and public libraries will have to co-operate more closely (Bawa, 1993:13-14; Johnstone, 1994:3).

One way of achieving this could be by the establishment of school/community library models (Verbeek and Stilwell, 1988:24; Stadler, 1991:20; Bristow, 1992:79; Bawa, 1993:13; Tawete, 1995). Such models should, however, be firmly rooted within the social needs and cultural patterns of the specific communities they are supposed to serve and must be appropriate to the particular situation (Chijioke, 1989:182). It would be inappropriate to develop and establish a uniform standard prototype school-community library model for all communities (Edwards, 1977a:7).

Any library model considered for South Africa should be orientated towards, and focused upon, our unique circumstances and requirements. Although we should learn from the experiences of other countries in implementing school/community models, it is not possible simply to transplant any overseas model and expect this to deliver what is needed in South Africa. For example, cognizance should be taken of the experience in Tanzania where only one of the ten school/community libraries established in the early 1970s with the assistance of Scandinavian countries is still functioning (Tawete, 1994:7). The implications of this approach suggest that there should be a definition of librarianship and information provision along the lines of resource centre policy and practice (Wyley, 1993:21; Daniels, 1994:35). The emergence of resource centres as alternative library and information services in South Africa was precisely the result of the inadequacy of the traditional public library services to meet the needs of particular communities (Fairer-Wessels and Machet, 1993:102).

### Some pre-requisites for success

The following factors are critical to the success of joint-use ventures:

- The local community must want and be prepared to support such a service. A feasibility study should be done to determine the need. Such a study should include a study of the community, a statement of its information needs, an assessment of its present information resources and services, an evaluation of the roles of existing information agencies and the formulation of a plan for a total information service through rationalization, co-operation and co-ordination (Edwards, 1977b:49).
- The needs assessment should lead to the development of clearly defined service goals and directives for their implementation (Burns, 1988:35). The people involved in the study should be representatives of democratically elected authoritative bodies in the community. The feasibility study committee should also invite submissions from voluntary associations in the area and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) (Edwards, 1977b, p.49-50).

- Planners should pay particular attention to the advice and experiences of professionals, public librarians and teacher-librarians (Amey, 1988:42).
- Both the school and the public library authorities would have to be convinced that joint use offers them benefits which could not be better achieved by other means (Jones, 1977:318) and planning should be done co-operatively.
- School and public library professionals should have a greater awareness of each others' roles (Chapman, 1979:264).

*When the staff in the public library know and regard as colleagues (and even better as friends) the staff in the schools whose children they serve, the potential for effective collaboration is tremendously expanded (Oestreich, 1994:17).*

- Success requires rigorous, detailed, advanced planning (Amey, 1987:62). The terms of governance should be clearly established and responsibilities defined in the early stages of planning (Woolard, 1978:438).
- Central government support would have to be evident not only initially but also on an ongoing basis. This should include organizational support from the provincial library service, such as inter-library loan facilities, centralized cataloguing and classification services, centralized resource evaluation and processing services and in-service training of staff.
- The physical facility should be easily accessible to the public and in the centre of the community. The spread of usage and the co-ordination of materials into one single collection would not require that the building be the size of the sum of the two areas needed, but it does need to be larger than a single public library branch or a single school library, in order to accommodate whole classes for extended work periods as well as sufficient study facilities.
- The quantity and range of library materials, both print and non-print, should cater for the information needs of pre-readers, young teenagers and adults and for the curriculum needs of students (Sheen, 1974:312).
- The importance of personnel for successful service would have to be recognized. The numbers of staff and the levels of staff to be provided by municipal and educational authorities would have to be established at the outset (Hambleton, 1979:189).
- Funding should be adequate for supporting a level of service comparable to that of two independent facilities (Chapman, 1979:264).
- Objective criteria should be developed to provide a means of evaluating the success of the combined facility (Aaron, 1978:53).

## Conclusion

It is unlikely that a community able to support, or now supporting, separate types of libraries will offer better school and public service through a combined programme. Combined services should therefore never be seen as an alternative to the ideal of separate school and public libraries.

When a community is, however, unable to provide minimum library services through separate facilities, a combined facility could be considered, in which case it would perhaps be advisable to undertake a pilot project. It is only through careful experimentation that the real problems can be defined and solutions devised (Edwards, 1977a:7).

In planning for alternative library models, library professionals and local authorities should take cognizance of the various policy documents issued by education departments, other national and provincial government departments, development plans and community initiatives so that planning is done in accordance with government policy.

It would appear that the South African situation would require a multiplicity of solutions designed to meet the varying patterns of school and community library services that exist now and will continue to exist for some time to come.

Perhaps you may be wondering what happened to our 'odd couple'. I can report that their divorce was finally announced in the *Library Journal* of January 1992 (Quinn, 1992:49).

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## STRUCTURED PUBLIC LIBRARY INFORMATION SERVICES TO SCHOOL LEARNERS: THE CASE OF BELHAR PUBLIC LIBRARY, CAPE TOWN

Dorothy Bothman, Belhar Public Library

The unsatisfactory conditions at school libraries in South Africa has had a direct impact on the service patterns of public libraries where they do exist. Public libraries are increasingly being used to support formal education at both school and tertiary levels. In the Belhar community the public library has in fact become a substitute for the school library, with longer opening hours, appropriate and relevant resources developed over a number of years and a committed, dedicated and enthusiastic staff.

This paper answers, very briefly, the question of whether the public library as a service agency has an educational role or primarily a cultural and recreational role. The paper also discusses the way in which information services to school learners were introduced at the Belhar Library and how organised reading programmes were initiated with disadvantaged schools in an attempt to develop a reading habit and improve reading skills.

### Role of the public library in education

The generalised aims of the public library as set out in the UNESCO Public Library Manifesto (revised in 1972) provide a clear guide as to what the roles of the public library should be in both developing and developed countries. These roles are:

- *Educational role:* To foster and provide means for self-development of the individual or group *at whatever stage of education*, closing the gap between the individual and recorded knowledge (regardless of format) ... offering adults and children the opportunity to keep in touch with their times, to educate themselves continuously and keep abreast of progress in the sciences and the arts.
- *Informational role:* To bring to the individual or group, accurate information quickly and in depth, particularly on topics of current concern. *Access to relevant information* is one of the most important requirements for all individuals and in particular our youth, if they are to cope with the demands and pressures of modern society and play a meaningful role in the community and society (Odin: 1990: 35-36).

The two remaining roles of the public library are its **cultural** and **recreational** roles. Jenni Karlsson (1995:3) is of the opinion that:

*... the notion that (public) libraries primarily perform a cultural and recreational service reflects an uninformed, liberal, first world perspective.*

and she regards this view as:

*...untenable for a country which has committed itself to national and provincial programmes of reconstruction and development.*

Access to the free flow of information is recognised as crucial to the success of the Reconstruction and Development Programme, both as related to formal education and the broader concept of disseminating information as a way of empowering communities and furthering development. Many public libraries, including Belhar Library, have collected statistical evidence and compiled reports on the use of their informational resources, indicating that public libraries have real and direct value to the system of formal education.

### **Introduction of information services to school learners at Belhar Library**

The need to develop school curriculum-based resource collections in the Belhar community library has been evident since the inception of the library service in 1982. With eight primary and three senior secondary schools located within the library's service area and the lack of concern for school library services and facilities on departmental level, school learners' curriculum needs were the first (and most obvious) issue to be addressed.

Subject coverage was initially based on pupil demand and on information received from subject teachers regarding the curriculum. Future information needs are anticipated by library and information workers who monitor the media for current events in political, cultural and other fields.

### **A special collection for school learners**

Curriculum-related resources already in stock are removed from the main collection and housed separately in an area specifically demarcated for use by school learners. Additional resources are acquired in the following ways:

- Provincial library surplus stock housed at Head Office is carefully examined and resources, if found to be relevant, are allocated to Belhar and incorporated into the collection;
- Booklists and reviews of new publications are scanned and requests made for specific titles which will fill gaps in the 'new' collection or the existing inadequate coverage is supplemented through the Provincial Library request system;
- A newspaper cutting and magazine article file is in use;
- Pamphlets and other printed resources from information agencies in the Cape Metropole are acquired for specialised information on current issues.

These activities require librarians to be alert and attentive to pupils' needs and seriously consider ideas and suggestions from other sources. Most importantly, they



assimilate new information sources into the special collection for school learners and constructively plan how to acquire other necessary resources.

### **Referral service**

Since an information service can never be self-sufficient and fully comprehensive in terms of its collection and therefore cannot always satisfy the diverse interests and information needs of the school community it serves, the library staff have developed a referral service as part of the library ethos and special service for school learners. An extensive co-operative informal network has been built up with public libraries, resource centres, universities and even private information centres in the Cape Town area, regardless of their affiliation or governing authorities. The availability of requested information is first determined telephonically on behalf of the user. If the need is urgent the learner is referred to the holding library or information agency. Otherwise the holding library forwards photocopies of the relevant information to the public library. Copies are then put on file to meet future requests. The Provincial Information Library also provides information on request, using a similar method.

Reference work and research activities of school learners primarily occurs within the library itself with instruction in resource use provided on an individual and/or group basis. One staff member is responsible for the maintenance and development of the collection as well as the supervision and guidance of children busy with theme work. Continuous evaluation of the service to school learners and keeping statistics of in-house usage for theme purposes also form part of the information librarian's responsibilities.

### **Library and information instructional programmes with organised classes**

Formal visits to the library by organised classes were introduced in 1988 but although these visits were encouraged, only dedicated teachers made use of the instructional services offered.

Classes come to the library for formal instruction over a period of three months accompanied by the subject teacher. The programme involves the following basic phases, adapted to fit the learners' different cognitive and educational levels:

*Phase 1:* Introduction to the different library departments, services, facilities and broad categories of printed and audio-visual resources. The physical characteristics of a book are explained and the different kinds of literature identified; viz. fiction and subject literature. The cataloguing and classification systems are introduced. After each theoretical session a practical exercise is given based on the lesson theme presented during each session.

*Phase 2:* Introduction to specific types of resources, i.e. encyclopedias, dictionaries, atlases and so on; how information is organised and how to find information. The newspaper cutting and newspaper article collection is introduced, particularly on topics of current issues and applicable to the curriculum.

*Phase 3:* A reference quiz providing the opportunity to assimilate and practically apply theoretical knowledge acquired during the previous phase, involving the use of all the different types of resources encountered.

*Phase 4:* How to do a project or an assignment. This lesson involves analysing the problem statement; locating the relevant resources containing the information; the structure of the work (i.e. introduction, headings, sub-headings and conclusion) based on information found; encouragement to interpret and relate information in own words and finally, the construction of a bibliography.

The entire process is monitored by the subject teacher and discussed further in the classroom.

The class visit approach is also used with senior secondary pupils. They are introduced to the variety of available resources, both printed and audio-visual, relating to the senior secondary school curriculum. Special discussion sessions with grade 11 and 12 pupils include the use of study guides for examination preparation as well as career choices, relating subject choice to different career options and tertiary education admission requirements.

The public library's direct involvement in the teaching of library and information skills to school learners has resulted in a phenomenal increase in the use of the library and library resources and has had a positive effect on student achievement. Although improved student achievement has not been empirically researched, follow-up reports from teachers and senior pupils have been positive and encouraging.

### **Reading programmes at primary schools in disadvantaged sectors**

The location of the library building in the more affluent sector of the Belhar community has meant that children living and schooling in lower socio-economic housing sections are furthest away from library facilities. The library has therefore introduced a reading programme at one specific school where children are exposed to severe social problems such as crime and parental neglect. Using the *book box* approach, about 400 books are issued to the school for a period of three months. Books are selected by the children's librarian accommodating the varying reading levels in each class as indicated by language teachers. The aim of the book box programme is to encourage reading for sheer pleasure and in this way for learners to cultivate a reading habit. A recent comment by the teacher facilitating this book box reading programme once again confirms that the library can make a difference in people's lives. He said:

*The reading programme is the best thing that could ever have happened to the school and to the children.*

Other regular children's programmes include story-telling sessions with pre-school group visits to the library, as well as occasional visits to the pre-school centres when invited for reading related programmes.

## Conclusion

It is Belhar library policy to respond positively to any calls for assistance from the local teaching profession, be it in the form of class visits to the library, or to address an entire school on the benefits of reading, or to provide resources for teaching purposes. We have succeeded in implementing an information service which is flexible and responsive to the information needs of school learners, which in turn has led to more relevant service provision and more effective networking between us and a variety of information agencies.

Barbara Masekela (1990:3) said that:

*... two rights central to human liberation are the right to learn and the right to know. Historically, South Africa has a shameful record on both counts. ... That is where the role of information workers becomes crucial.*

Information is the domain of all libraries, including the public library, therefore the information provision function of the public library should be exploited, particularly in developing communities where the need for access to all kinds of information is crucial. It is time that both the teaching profession and the government gave public libraries credit for their contribution to development through their practical support to educational institutions and learners.

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## **CLASSROOM LIBRARIES**

Cynthia Hugo, Read Educational Trust

### **Providing Quality Education for South African Schools**

Change in education depends on, and needs to begin in, the classroom and the school. Without such fundamental transformation, no policy and improved curricula can be effective.

At the present time it is essential to deliver, as rapidly as possible, visible instruments of change in order to improve morale and retain the credibility of the new Ministry of Education. The provision of learning resources such as books (which have a symbolic significance) and training programmes in the use of these resources, together would effectively and practically demonstrate a serious intention to deliver in terms of the new educational system.

The quality of education in a classroom is, to a large extent, dependent on an adequate supply of appropriate resources to make learner-centred teaching and independent learning possible. Without resources, reliance on the textbook is usually the norm and rote learning is more likely to continue to be common practice.

These resources for the teacher and learner need to be housed in a portable, lockable container. They should be kept in the classroom and managed by the teacher in order to be as accessible as possible for easy use in our present situation in which often, neither the teacher nor the learner are accustomed to using resources. They need to develop familiarity with learning resources.

### **Why is Reading so Important?**

Literacy is the most important single goal of modern education. Computer literacy, a skill which is becoming indispensable for an individual, cannot begin without the ability to read.

Learning to read, especially in the early stages, requires considerable effort and there must be rewards for this effort. The rewards for reading are mainly internal and personal. We read mostly because what we read makes us feel in certain ways. Many reading schemes currently available are certainly no reward for the pupil's efforts. For example, learners are forced to interact with meaningless texts which are often beneath their intellectual ability. It is very important to provide reading materials which will engage learners' imagination and intellect.

### **Why Must Pupils Learn To Read**

The culture we live in requires that we are literate. Illiteracy is stigmatising and alienating. In addition, the ability to read is a pre-requisite to any form of higher education.



Other educational goals that are dependent on the child's ability to read are:

- Language development
- General knowledge
- Accessing information
- Cognitive development
- Moral development

The acquisition of general and specific knowledge is one of the main objectives of education. At the present time it is hard to imagine acquiring knowledge without the use of books.

Another important goal of school education is not learning and remembering facts, but learning how to find them and how to evaluate the sources of information. Even though a child's cognitive development does not depend on literacy, reading provides opportunities for cognitive growth. Reading develops imagination, stimulates creative and critical thinking and provides space for reflection.

A narrative mode of reading material plays an important part in a child's learning because the foundations of all education are said to be poetic and imaginative. Even logico-mathematical and rational forms of thinking grow out of imagination and depend on it. In this sense, storytelling should be the basic educational method because it corresponds with the fundamental thinking structures of the human mind. Indeed it is nearly impossible not to think in story terms.

The best way to instil universal moral values is through stories and reading because stories inspire us to be better than we are. They have become more important in a society like ours that has experienced a lot of divisions, disruptions and confusion.

Furthermore, children who are exposed to an extensive range of high-interest, illustrated story books which they are encouraged to read and discuss with the teacher and their peers, not only become much better readers, but also increase their proficiency in the second language much more rapidly and competently than children who are restricted to a graded reading scheme and a structured approach to second language learning. These gains spill over into other subjects, even into reading and oral skills in the home language. This is particularly true of children in rural areas whose exposure to English outside school is meagre. Wide reading is the only way of providing sufficient comprehensible input in the target language to children in such conditions.

Thus it is essential that learners have continual and easy access to books. Arguments that the position of an adequate supply of bookstock is too expensive for government can simply not be countenanced. Innovative strategies and the reallocation of budgets are necessary to make this possible. The gains, in terms of years at school, more than compensate for the cost of the requisite learning resources. In addition, the present attrition rate of textbooks (one third of textbooks are not returned each year) can be

substantially reduced by teaching pupils to value well chosen and interesting books and by providing an experience of books which is meaningful. This will mean that part of the funding usually spent on textbooks can be available for library books. Schools can be made conscious of this possibility and asked for their co-operation.

### **What is a Classroom Library?**

The initial classroom library provision is a selection of about 60 books, consisting of exciting and colourful fiction books appropriate to the child's reading and interest level, non-fiction books closely related to topics on the curriculum and a few reference books such as dictionaries and an atlas. These resources are placed in a strong, lockable, portable wooden box which functions both as a storage container and a display cabinet. However, any kind of display unit or a library corner could be equally functional.

### **The Purpose of the Classroom Library**

A classroom library provides learning resources for both teacher and learners. The non-fiction books help the teacher in her/his lesson preparation. There are training programmes which show the teacher how to use books to make content lesson teaching more interesting. This is particularly important for teachers in rural areas where there is no central resource provision to which they can turn for lesson preparation. The classroom library enables the teacher to move away from the 'tyranny' of textbooks and demonstrate to learners that facts can come from more than one source and how knowledge is selected, presented and interpreted differently in different sources. This leads learners to develop critical thinking and appraisal skills.

The classroom library also provides resources for learners to use. It is a model miniature library which can be used to prepare learners for visits to a central school library or community library. In no way should classroom libraries replace the school library but they should be seen as a first step towards it. Furthermore, many schools, especially primary schools, do not have a central library and it is unlikely that departments will be able to employ full-time school librarians in the near future. A locked central library is not the answer to the reading needs of the primary school child. Thus, at the present time the classroom library model provides an essential resource for learners. Through the classroom library model children are introduced to book organisation and classification, both of which skills are essential to their future independent study and research skills.

The very presence of book resources within the classroom means that books and book-related learning are integrated into the learners' classroom experience from the first grade. At first children are encouraged to use the classroom library to choose their books for the silent reading lesson. Later, they are encouraged to read books in free periods when the teacher is called out of the classroom, when they finish a task more quickly than other learners and after school hours. When they have learned proper care of books they are encouraged to take books home and share them with other members of the family. The classroom library can be a tool that brings books and children together and ensures that a reading culture flourishes.

This model can form the focal point of a classroom as a library corner where silent and shared reading can take place. The books add colour and a centre of interest to the classroom. The books are selected to be at the right level of reading, and encourage the teacher and learners to make time for reading. Learners must be free to choose the books they read and must be allowed to handle them freely. When they reach the stage at which they need to read for information, the classroom library provides teachers with a gentle way of introducing learners to finding and using books on a particular topic.

### **To conclude**

The ability to read well, to process and re-use information, is the basis of all successful learning. Children can become successful readers only if they are exposed to a wide variety of stimulating reading resources. In situations where children are using a language that is not their home language, their competence in the second language is closely related to the development of their reading. This also has a positive effect on their learning in other subjects.

"Children learn to read by reading". This truism presupposes that children have a wide range of books to read. In addition, good reading skills are essential to success in senior grades at school and even for tertiary level education. Unfortunately most South African children come from homes where very little reading takes place, where there are no books and where a reading culture is not understood. A weak book culture and a lack of reading in the home (including when parents read to their children) has a negative effect on the whole of a child's learning.

In the South African situation the most efficient way to compensate for this is to provide children with an intimate and pleasurable knowledge of books. This can be facilitated by providing classroom libraries in all classes and by training every primary school teacher to introduce his/her pupils to books as an integral part of their learning and leisure experience.

## EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT CENTRES

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### Educational Development Centres Within a Regional Structure

Education Development Centres (EDCs) could become important components of the new provincial education departments. Such centres could promote and strengthen networking among schools and be effective vehicles for renewing and upgrading the culture of learning at a regional level. They could thus play an important role in the reconstruction and development of education.

The new paradigm for education and training which involves a shift from focusing on teaching to a new emphasis on learning, can be effectively facilitated by Education Development Centres. EDCs could provide the facilities and infrastructure for school subject and phase advisers to provide in-service training (INSET) and staff development programmes involving 30 to 40 teachers at a time. Furthermore, the curriculum development which INSET supports would become more relevant and effective because teachers could be drawn into it at the local level where their involvement is vitally important. As teachers are given more scope and freedom to choose learning content and experiences to achieve specified learning outcomes, so they will need more access to resources and information to develop the curriculum.

In addition to incorporating INSET and curriculum development resource centres, EDCs could also support regional or local education department offices. District or area managers would find them useful venues for educational leadership and management training seminars and meetings.

It is envisaged that the existing Teachers Centres in KwaZulu-Natal, established by the former House of Delegates (HOD) Department of Education and Culture, could be modified to become EDCs which will be used more widely. However, there is an inadequate number of these former HOD Teachers Centres. Thus, new EDCs would have to be established, especially in areas where there is a greater need for educational resources. These EDCs could be located within colleges of education and at schools which have media centres or libraries that are also suitable for use as community libraries. The most disadvantaged and deprived schools would be supported and upgraded through EDCs.

EDCs, attached to a school or as separate stand-alone centres, will be important components of the provincial department's regional office. Thus, schools, colleges or administration buildings that could serve as EDCs should be identified so that structured networking between schools can be established.

<sup>14</sup> Dr Schroenn is now with a publishing company.



Amongst many other educational activities, EDCs could be used for the following functions:

- A library or resource centre for teachers and school learners should be a central feature of the EDC. The collection could include reference books, journals, magazines, curriculum support material and guides, technological and audiovisual equipment, computers, and videotapes.
- Publishers could exhibit books and learning materials to teachers and teacher-librarians. Some publishers and book companies may be willing to donate specimen copies of books to the EDC and these could be sold at discount prices. Funds generated in this way could help finance the running costs of the EDC's library.
- Teachers can use the resource centre's reprographic facilities to produce and share curriculum material such as notes, diagrams, worksheets, test and exam papers. These could be stored in filing cabinets and made available to all the teachers in the region.
- The EDC's resource centre would promote learners' acquisition of information skills and use of multi and single media learning resources.
- Talks and seminars on vocations and careers can be geared to secondary school learners. These will also promote and support career and vocationally oriented education in schools. The resource centre can network with commerce and industry to arrange displays about careers. Brochures and other information useful for guiding learners as they plan their further education and careers can be kept in the resource centre's collection.
- Talented and gifted learners in the region can be brought to the EDC for curriculum extension and enrichment programmes. These could be led by experts and specialists in various fields and held on Saturdays, weekday afternoons or during vacations.
- EDCs can be a centre from which counsellors and consultants can advise parents about matters such as extra lessons, TV viewing, and the need for special or remedial education.
- Cultural activities can be held in the EDC's function rooms. For example, the EDC can host exhibitions that display the best of learners' art, craft and writing. Travelling exhibitions in school halls could also be coordinated by the staff of the EDC. Such exhibitions can be used to foster awareness of local and regional history, ecology, environmental concerns and current issues. Such events can be co-ordinated by the librarian so that learners are encouraged to explore books on these topics that can be found in the library.
- Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) courses could be run at EDCs.
- By networking with other educational agencies such as museums, community libraries and clubs, the EDC can identify, draw on and co-ordinate a wide range of expertise that can be used to enhance the school experience of learners in the region.

The EDC's resource centre should be developed to become an even more dynamic learning centre than the traditional library in order to provide more effective teaching support services and to facilitate the integration and presentation of the curriculum meaningfully and relevantly.

Ultimately, schools should develop their own resource centres to play a key role in the effective delivery of the curriculum, the promotion of independent learning and the support of teachers' needs. In particular, the resource centre or library within a school or an EDC serving a cluster of schools is vitally important for the following reasons:

- It is a key support for learning and teaching. The resource centre is an area in which teacher-assistants could be employed at far less cost than teachers. Prospective teacher-assistants would need special in-service training. A team of such trained teacher assistants led by a qualified media teacher could make the resource centre more dynamic and accessible. The new post of teacher-assistant would give members of the community an opportunity to become involved.
- A new focus on independent learning and self study is essential to enable teachers to cope with their teaching loads and to prepare those learners who will have to meet the demands of tertiary education and the world of work. If pupils are to be able to use study periods optimally they will need to gain access to the range of documents and materials available in the resource centre.
- The ability to read effectively and to respond critically to media is the most important determinant of academic success and maintenance of sound standards. Resource centres should play a key role in promoting reading for various purposes and in developing the skills of reading for information, research, study and enjoyment.
- The integration of the curriculum which is experienced in the classroom can be effectively achieved when learners have access to a wide range of learning resources. The diversity of 'voices' represented in the resource centre will enable learners to see the interrelationship of subjects and to develop a more coherent conceptual frame of reference. This is very important if schooling is to be relevant to the world beyond the school.
- The knowledge and information explosion makes it essential to develop a learning society, a learning ethic and the continuity of life-long learning. The EDC's resource centre which is open during the afternoons, evenings, on Saturdays and during the holidays can serve the whole community and develop a learning culture even among those who are not attending school. A team of specially trained teacher-assistants would be needed for this purpose. Enquiry methods of learning and more independent learning may thus be effectively supported and promoted.
- Curriculum extension and enrichment depend fundamentally on an effective resource base as one would find in a library or resource centre.
- Information technology (such as videos, films, recordings, computers and compact disks) will become increasingly important resources in education. Enrichment and remedial education can also be effected through the use of computer assisted learning.

- Different approaches to teaching all depend on a dynamic library or resource centre. For example, peer-led learning, team teaching, group work tasks, teaching-backs, and linking up with other agents of education can all be facilitated by the teacher-librarian and a library.
- New developments in education will necessitate a review of the management of learning resources (both human and material resources), the learning process and approaches to teaching. Resource centres should become more dynamic and upgraded in status by, for example, having the office of a Head of Department located in the resource centre, not to run it but to give expression to the interrelatedness of the classroom curriculum and library-based resources.
- Inter-library networks should be developed among schools for the sharing of resources and to avoid duplication of resources.

Just like teachers, learners need to know how to cope with the shift of emphasis to the learning process and the growing volume of information. The teacher librarian, information technology and EDC resource centres are essential tools to support learners in actualising their potential and reaching the highest educational standards and achievements.

## THE VIRTUAL LIBRARY

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### Introduction

The *virtual library* is a possible option for the provision of information and the sharing of resources between educational institutions such as colleges of education and secondary schools. I will firstly define the virtual library, then determine what the virtual library can offer with regard to information sources. Finally, taking into account all the different variables, I will consider whether the virtual library could be a feasible alternative to the traditional school library.

### Defining the virtual library

I found different definitions of the *virtual library* in the literature (*The virtual library...*, 1993:vii; Barker, 1994; Blake, 1994; Cloyes, 1994:253; McKenzie, 1994). There are simple definitions. For example, that the virtual library is 'a metaphor for the networked library' or it is the 'electronic integration of new services with traditional library services'. These define the virtual library as a traditional library which uses 'technology and innovation to meet customer demand' (Cloyes, 1994:253). Other definitions refer to the virtual library as a desktop library, an online library, an electronic library, a seamless library, a library without walls or the information superhighway.

Here the emphasis is on remote access without there having to be a library collection in the school where the computers are situated. The virtual library is environmentally friendly and end-users are more involved in searching for and retrieving information (Cloyes, 1994:253; Ginsburg, 1994:258). Barker (1994:228) goes so far as to define the virtual library as one which will depend upon virtual reality for its existence, that is, one which will create a simulated or surrogate library and might even include 'access to "virtual librarians" who could help users to find the information and experiences to which they wish to gain access'.

My definition of the virtual library is that it is online desktop (or laptop) access to remote hypermedia information, largely without charge. In the context of a country such as South Africa it is necessary to add this last stipulation as many schools are located in poor communities.

### Advantages of a virtual school library

Many librarians are already familiar and experienced in using some of the components of a virtual library. In South Africa they participate in electronic networks such as Sabinet and obtain information from community information online systems such as SANGONeT, Bridges and the Community Information Resource Centre (CRIC). In some South African schools it is already possible to access school library resources from classrooms by means of Local Area Networks or LANs as they are called; while



there are schools which have linked up to national or international networks (Burleigh and Weeg, 1993:156; O'Kennedy, 1995:9).

According to Lowry and Richards (1994) it should be possible to build a state-of-the-art electronic library which delivers bibliographic and full-text information to desktop computers. Therefore a possible scenario for the South African education system could be to have one such library per province which would specialize in local and regional information sources. The schools in each province would have virtual libraries, i.e., schools would have computer centres (ultimately each student should have his or her own lap-top computer) where students could log on to the education library for local information, but also to the Internet for all their other information requirements.

## Internet

The Internet is a worldwide network of autonomous networks, all of which are interconnected. Students exchange information and ideas with other students in different parts of the world using e-mail and video-conferencing (Internet Relay Chats). They also obtain information from all over the world by accessing the libraries of the world or by linking to information sources specially developed for schools. According to Burleigh, Weeg and Hawker (1995:171):

*...it is impossible to suggest that any school library can offer all the printed resources available in the world to their staff and students. [However] It is possible to suggest that any school library can offer access to the library of the world - the Internet.*

The range and scope of the educational resources available on the Internet are vast. Just a brief mention will give some indication of the opportunities afforded to students. KIDLINK is a resource recording the work of children while under the guidance of their teachers as they engage in global dialogue and research (Burleigh and Weeg, 1993). Web pages of the KIDLINK Multi-Cultural Calendar include a wonderful collection of cultural celebrations comprising text, graphic and sound files created by children all over the world (Burleigh, Weeg and Hawker, 1995:175). Web pages are available on the World Wide Web (WWW) and contain hypermedia colour pictures, audio and moving images. One gets access to this information by using a Web browser such as Netscape or Mosaic, which are available on the Internet for a variety of different computer systems (Mewes, 1994:7).

The Internet Public Library (IPL) on the WWW is one of the sources I have used. This virtual library was created as a project of University of Michigan graduate library students and has a reference room, youth division, exhibition area, and resources and services. There is a question and answer service to reference enquiries, bibliographies, online reference works, and links to other information sources.<sup>15</sup> The youth division offers a story hour, a writing competition, Dr Internet's Science Project and Ask the

<sup>15</sup>

Available on Internet at: <http://ipl.sils.umich.edu/>

Author - a forum for putting questions to well-known children's writers (Internet Public Library..., 1995:14). Other relevant websites are too numerous to mention.<sup>16</sup>

### Factors influencing the virtual library

It is clear that the virtual library as I have defined it, already exists and will become increasingly prominent in the future as print is continually subordinated (Heseltine, 1994:iv). However, all the variables must be taken into account when considering and costing the virtual library as an alternative to the traditional library.

Students who have a negative attitude to the traditional school library may be more motivated to use information technology. Most students enjoy using computers to access reference works on CD-ROM or to exchange information internationally on Internet. Computers can be put to many other educational uses besides resource-sharing and information access, for example, word processing for creative writing, simulation exercises, drill and practice and computer-based graphics. Information technology can therefore help to motivate learning.

A traditional library requires costly facilities and a variety of expensive information sources which must constantly be replaced with new ones. Some of the reasons students have given for not using school libraries are that these libraries are often closed, their resources are insufficient, irrelevant, out-of-date or, in the case of audio-visual materials, broken (Olén, 1993:39). However, the information obtained from the virtual library will usually be sufficient, relevant, up-to-date and accessible, unless of course the system is down.

Unfortunately information from the Internet often takes a long time to appear on one's screen which can be frustrating. Local collections in universities or provincial education libraries would have to be digitized and this would require large sums of money and would take time (Cage, 1994; DeLoughry, 1994). Thus, the virtual library will not necessarily be a cheaper alternative to the traditional library because, although the prices of computers have decreased over the last decade, the initial purchase of sufficient numbers for a computer centre is expensive.

Ideally each student should have his or her own computer and this would be even more costly than a computer centre which accommodates only one class. Both hardware and software continually need to be upgraded and computer equipment becomes obsolete within three to five years. Although at present much of the information available on the Internet is free, in the future there may be charges for certain kinds of information.

Students learn to use computers fairly easily and the information on screens has become very user-friendly. Thus, with the virtual library the problem is no longer

<sup>16</sup> Four website addresses where information sources relevant for school libraries can be assessed, are listed as a starting point for those who would like to discover what is available on the WWW:

<http://www.scils.rutgers.edu/special/kay/kayhp2.html>  
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/~dkbrown/index.html>  
<http://www.users.interport.net/~fairrosa>  
<http://www.skima.is/lindin/>

access to information but effective utilization of information. Having access to information globally means that we are confronted with the problem of information overload. While the technological infrastructure to access information is important, Gopen (1994:1-14) cautions that as the library is a social and cultural phenomenon, it is important for us not to lose sight of the users and their needs. We must also remember that information is not synonymous with knowledge, but only becomes knowledge when it has been assimilated and processed through a person's prior knowledge and value system.

Students will still need to acquire and develop all the traditional information skills: that is, locating, selecting, organizing or manipulating, analyzing, evaluating and presenting information. In addition, when using electronic information they will have to learn how to navigate the information superhighway or 'cyberspace' as it is called (Von Wodtke, 1994). Students will also have to process information and integrate it with their existing knowledge in order to learn. They will need to be aware of issues such as copyright restrictions and the need to cite their sources. If teachers are to be in a position to assist their students to acquire and develop information skills it is imperative that they receive training in information skills. Teachers will also need to use information technology and be continually aware of the new developments in the field.

Craver (1994:xiv) suggests that as the use of computers becomes more thoroughly integrated into classrooms, their presence will force many teachers to re-evaluate their teaching styles and methods. The computer lends itself to interactive individual work, resource-based teaching and learning, collaboration and online instruction. Rote memorization has long been in disfavour and the new technologies can be used to create more productive learning environments where there is greater emphasis on symbolic-analytical thinking and problem-solving.

### Government funding for virtual library projects

In the United Kingdom, the Libraries of the Future Project of the National Council for Educational Technology, with the British Library Research and Development Department and Department of Education Northern Ireland have, as their goal, to develop a realistic vision of the future of libraries in education, because:

*the Follett Review Group envisaged a typical library of the year 2001 as being a virtual library and many writers agree (Bergen and Carter, 1994:101-102).*

In the United States of America the US Advisory Council on the National Information Infrastructure is debating policy issues to try and improve equity in the online environment and lifelong learning (Mancall, 1995:159-160). In 1993, the Technology for Education Act was introduced in the Senate. This would provide:

*funding for Internet connections and for training for school personnel in the use of technology (Garland, 1994:99).*

In 1994, three federal agencies provided 24 million dollars to six universities for virtual library projects (DeLoughry, 1994). The Library of Congress is also starting to digitize its resources.

Some of the priorities for the South African education authorities are to redress past imbalances by, *inter alia*, ensuring literacy and equitable access to resources for all. It therefore stands to reason that options such as the READ classroom library, the suitcase library and the school/ community library should all be considered as a means to achieving their goals. However, if we are to remain at the cutting edge of technological developments and compete with other industrialized countries, our students will also have to have access to relevant curriculum-related information and develop the skills needed to access information technologies. The education authorities in South Africa should therefore also seriously consider the virtual library as an option, particularly for secondary schools and colleges of education.

## Conclusion

We are faced with many technological, educational and cultural changes and we can only surmise how the rate of change in all these areas may escalate in the 21st century. With the technology already available, many of the functions of the virtual library are already in operation. The virtual library is therefore feasible and inevitable and although we do not have all the answers now, we can be reasonably certain that changes will continue to take place and with great rapidity. It is important that education and library planners become aware and maintain an awareness of developments and changes and keep options open in order to be flexible, because what today may seem unlikely to some could be the norm in 10 to 15 years time. The virtual library may well become the school library of the future.

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## CONCLUSION

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There is no dispute among educators, librarians and education department bureaucrats that learners should have access to curriculum-related resources. However, that these resources would be readily accessible if they were library-based is often overlooked or ignored by educators and bureaucrats. Library practitioners have a poor track record of effectively engaging decision-makers, policy developers and implementors on these issues. This is so even though since 1990 librarians have been fervent and articulate advocates of school and public libraries and the role that these institutions can play in education.

- In 1990-92 a group of library activists and researchers were able to persuade the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI) to devote an entire volume to a report on library and information services.
- In 1994 the African National Congress' (ANC) Policy Framework for Education and Training devoted a chapter to library and information services.
- In 1994 the ANC's Implementation Plan for Education and Training included a report on library and information services.

Despite these developments, neither the first nor the second White Papers for Education made a conceptual connection between the new curriculum and libraries for school learners. It would seem that those concerned about libraries, library-based resources and school learners were talking solely to themselves. On the other hand, it can be argued that library related issues are insignificant in the face of other educational priorities such as the building of new classrooms and library issues will only get a hearing after these other demands have been met. Regardless of the efficacy of these views, it is certain that there are obstacles in the development of policy for school libraries and library-based resources.

What are the reasons for this apparent failure? Is it because librarians are traditionally regarded as conservative and slow to change and adapt? Is there a deficiency in their understanding of the resource constraints facing the new education departments and hence librarians exhibit a lack of creativity in adapting the traditional school library model to meet present conditions? Or are practitioners concentrating their advocacy energies on ensuring that policy developers recognise the library as an educational institution and by so doing are losing sight of the school learner and learning? While there may be some truth in all of the above possibilities, the answer is not obvious.

Almost without exception, librarians support the principles and aims of the new education system such as lifelong learning and critical thinking precisely because these aims are consonant with the espoused aims of libraries. Library practitioners have therefore shown a willingness to change and be part of the post-apartheid transformation process. Furthermore, in keeping with a vocation of social service, librarians are eager to implement traditional and innovative ways in which to extend library services to those who have previously been disadvantaged.

During the period of apartheid there were already isolated librarians who were aware of the problems of African learners needing access to library-based resources and who began to explore ideas of how this could be achieved. For example, the classroom library model described in this publication was developed as a result of the initiative of Cynthia Hugo after the 1976 uprising of school learners in Soweto. Several other models have been implemented on a limited scale. These too, are reported and discussed elsewhere in this publication. Thus, the lack of successful intervention in the policy process is neither attributable to practitioners' resistance to change nor to a poor response to adapt to the limited resources of the new departments.

Policy initiatives such as NEPI (1990-92) and IPET (1994) were partially successful in gaining recognition of the need for school library policy in that research groups were established specifically for library and information services. However, separate groups had the effect of marginalising library issues because there was limited contact with other researchers grappling with important educational principles and issues such as the curriculum and teacher education. In addition, there was a noticeable absence of teacher-librarians among the participants of these groups.

NEPI's library and information services report, the chapter in the ANC's Policy Framework for Education and Training, as well as the relevant IPET report, all reveal a superficial use of pedagogic arguments to justify the existence of school libraries. Arguments which educationists would use and understand, such as delivery of the curriculum and classroom practices, are neglected or only mentioned in passing. This failure may be due to the fact that librarians have concentrated on the role of the library as an *institutionalised service*. In fact the IPET report displays an over-emphasis on organisational and governance structures, and institutional issues. The reason for this must surely be that this report was written and compiled by librarians and not educationists.

This publication identifies the constraints and obstacles which prevent school learners gaining access to library-based resources and discusses alternative library models which may be suitable for implementation in our schools. Although this is a valuable contribution to the school library model debate, it is important that those involved in developing library related policy for South Africa's public schools should revisit the objectives of education and inform themselves about contemporary understandings of the learning process.

This approach may shed new insights on how teachers and learners at all levels use and engage with books and other materials on a daily basis in the classroom. This may lead us to new ideas of how to provide learners with access to collections of library-based resources. Research may reveal that the traditional school library is *not* an essential component of every school, that different models are suited to different school phases and that other delivery mechanisms are more appropriate to the needs of learners and more cost-effective for education departments and schools.

Indeed, it is conceivable that the traditional Western school library model may not even be affordable or desirable to the school community. The notion that every school has to have the same library model is problematic and rigid. The *Hunter Report*, *White Paper 2* and the *South African Schools Bill*, adopt a flexible stance regarding school

governance functions. This approach recognises that school communities may have access to different community-based resources and have different competencies and so governing bodies will be able to get assistance from the education department for those functions in which they have little or no capacity. There is merit in such flexibility.

A comparable approach would be to have school communities select from a menu of library models, that which is most appropriate and affordable in their particular school context. This may result in a diverse range of library models among a cluster of schools. Although this may be an administrator's 'nightmare', it will shift the present focus away from establishing clones of the costly libraries found in Model C schools onto the needs of learners, the use of learning resources in the classroom and more efficient and effective systems of providing access to resources.

Involving school communities in the decision about the school library model will require an appreciation of the curriculum framework. Although some would argue that this is a pedagogic matter best left to educators, this involvement may be the catalyst to mobilise community involvement so that learners have greater access to library-based resources.

It is anticipated that further research by the Education Policy Unit and others will shed light on these issues and inform policy developers and education departments on more efficient and effective ways of providing learners with access to library-based resources.